University of Alberta

The Exhibition as Memorial: Canada's Travelling War Art Display, 1919-1934

by

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Canada

Many an artist went into the war to paint realistic outward appearing things and came out of it with a bitter resentment at destruction. The promoters of the records have been wise to encourage them and to keep their work, and it may be that these works which appear so strange to us now will be the real links that carry on a clear vision of our age to the future.

– "Canada's War Pictures," *Canadian Forum* 7, no. 74 (November 1926): 38.

We are not concerned with art in general, but with art as applied to war memorials. In some way every picture or piece of sculpture representing an incident of warfare may be regarded as a war memorial, provided that it belongs to the time with which it deals, and expresses the spirit of that time.

– Paul Konody in *Art and War: Canadian War Memorials* (London: Colour Magazine Ltd., 1919), 6.

Remembrance shapes our links to the past, and the ways we remember define us in the present…[W]e know how slippery and unreliable personal memory can be…But a society's collective memory is no less contingent, no less unstable, its shape by no means permanent. It is always subject to subtle and not so subtle reconstruction.

– Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 249.

To Greg, Mom and Dad

Abstract

The Canadian War Memorials Fund (CWMF) was created November 17th, 1916 by William Maxwell Aitken – Lord Beaverbrook – as a documentary project to record key events of the First World War. Beaverbrook, a wealthy, influential Canadian newspaperman living in Britain, had contacts to politicians, military leaders and members of the cultural communities of both countries. He administered the CWMF along with fellow newspaper-baron, Lord Rothermere, art critic Paul Konody, National Gallery of Canada Director Eric Brown and Trustee Sir Edmund Walker. The CWMF's role in Canadian history has been described as one that introduced modernism to the country, and produced reliable documents of the life of Canadian soldiers at the Front from 1914 to 1918. This thesis contends, rather, that the CWMF often produced propaganda and memorial images, rather than trustworthy records of the war, and that the Fund's committee carefully restricted the production of avant-garde art work in their commissions.

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Introduction

> When the last gun has been backed off the last battlefield on the war map, and the last warplane has folded its wings, some lone figure with a sketching-easel will be looking over what's left. Art will end what war began. After more than three years of war that seemed to be killing art, the artist is now busy making War Records.[1]

When Canadian art critic Augustus Bridle wrote these words in early 1919 in the *Canadian Courier* magazine, he was describing a newly-created programme that sought to document the contribution of Canadian forces in the First World War. The project, called the Canadian War Memorials Fund (CWMF), was inspired by ventures initiated by the British and Australian governments, and would itself come to stand as a template for similar war art programmes adopted by many nations in the Second World War. The man who created the Fund and would act as its director, Sir Maxwell Aitken, was a media maverick and a politician from Ontario, with his hands in the affairs of political parties, governments and powerful agencies both in Canada and Great Britain.

History writing in Canada since the First World War, at least what little of it has managed to piece together the Fund's often confusing story from scant remaining sources, has tended to take a very particular stand on the role Aitken's project assumed during the war and in the years following the Armistice of November, 1918. The conventional narrative about the CWMF goes as follows: established and amateur artists in Canada were commissioned by the Canadian War Memorials Fund to capture scenes of valour and courage. These soldier-artists returned home having confronted a reality that was instead brutal and shattering. Their experiences impelled them to increasingly make use of modernist techniques to express their vision and to convey their experiences of life at war – techniques that came to be recognised as uniquely Canadian modes of representation. Their new style of artistic expression became touted as a means for Canadians to identify with their collective culture and became intrinsically tied to the growth of nationalism in Canada around the time of the Great War.

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[1] Augustus Bridle, "Canadian Artists to the Front," *Canadian Courier* 23, no. 10 (February 16, 1918): 7.

Artists working for the CWMF did indeed paint and sketch in France and Flanders in the later years of the war, and many were affected by what they saw there. But the project's course was much more complex and problematic than the summary above acknowledges. Officially established in November 1916 through an application to the Canadian government, the project was from its outset intended to contribute to a larger network of documentary ventures initiated by Britain and her allies from 1914 to 1918. Sir Max Aitken, later Lord Beaverbrook, was the intellect and the energy behind the Fund. As a Canadian living in London, his ties to both British and Canadian politicians, officials, writers and socialites led many to believe that the was the perfect person to create and administer such a scheme. As publisher of three of London's top newspapers, Aitken possessed credible skills to direct an operation the size anticipated for the Fund and he had a keen understanding of how to produce stimulating reports and images that appealed to readers.

Aitken acquired the assistance of several fellow British newspapermen – Lord Rothermere and Bertrand Lima, influential and wealthy men in their own right, as well as officials from Canada's National Gallery – in helping to establish the project and select artists. Activities began with the commissioning of a single British artist, Richard Jack, to reconstruct in paint a scene depicting Canadian soldiers at the Second Battle of Ypres in 1915. Soon, more artists were added to the scheme: British, Canadian, Belgian, Australian, men and women, painters, print-makers and sculptors, the celebrated and the virtually unknown.

By the end of the war, the CWMF proved far more comprehensive than either the Australian scheme or that of the British Pictorial Propaganda Committee: it comprised 116 artists and its collection featured over 900 works depicting everything from battle scenes and the movement of troops, to railway construction and women factory workers.[2] These pieces – some small watercolours and sketches, others huge paintings measuring twenty feet in height or width – were gathered together in 1919 for an exhibition hosted by London's Royal Academy of Art in January and February. The display, attended by dignitaries such as the Prince of Wales and Canadian Prime Minister Sir Robert Borden, was proclaimed a success by those in attendance, and in the following weeks by art critics in the press. Over the next fifteen years, the Fund's collection would be exhibited again, once in New York, and eight more times in Canada – in Toronto, Montréal and Ottawa. Plans were even begun after the war to house the collection in a grand permanent war memorial gallery, to be built in a prominent location in Ottawa. But as the years passed, support for the Fund dwindled and it found itself in financial crisis and without the support of the Canadian government or the general public.

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[2] Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War: Canada, Art, and the Great War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 77.

This thesis explores the apparent failure of the Canadian War Memorials Fund to become a lasting monument to the First World War. Eschewing the celebratory narrative of emerging Canadian modernism that usually frames the history of the CWMF, this thesis situates the Fund within the atmosphere of propaganda and censorship efforts in Canada, by tracing its evolution from earlier journalistic and documentary-photography projects initiated during the Great War. I aim to show that the Canadian War Memorials Fund was an extremely complex project, stretched in different directions by the many expectations that were placed on it by its organising committee, the Canadian and British governments, the artists who were hired into it, and the art critics and general public who comprised its audience. The many divergent roles included that of a producer of documentary records of the war, a generous supporter of vastly different artistic styles, a propaganda device, and a memorialising entity. Eventually, the CWMF failed as it could not live up to all of the roles it was assigned and to which it aspired.

Further, I will argue that the Canadian War Memorials Fund did have the potential to sustain itself after the war in the form of its most compelling role – that of a monument to Canada's part in the war and a commemoration of the myth of the birth of Canadian nationalism through the conflict. Through an examination of the ways in which Canadians constructed a collective memory of the First World War, and an assessment of some of the other types of memorialising projects that were taking place after 1918, this thesis will contend that other, more permanent and emotionally-satisfying monuments overshadowed the CWMF and caused it to be largely abandoned and neglected over the better part of the next 85 years.

The Canadian War Memorials Fund has been the subject of a number of studies, some as the sole focus, such as in Maria Tippett's 1984 *Art at the Service of War: Canada, Art, and the Great War*. In other examinations, the CWMF is included in a larger discussion of war-time efforts to record and mould the understanding of Canada's part on the front-lines, as in Jonathan Vance's *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War*, published in 1997, and Jeffrey Keshen's 1996 *Propaganda and Censorship During Canada's Great War*. Historians such as Laura Brandon and Heather Robertson have tended to focus on the CWMF collection or exhibitions specifically, while in still other studies, the Fund proves only incidental to the recounting of the life and work of Sir Max Aitken.

This thesis aims to bring together the various studies that have been done on World War I documentary, and the CWMF project more specifically. In addition, it centres the Fund not only within the field of documentary journalism and the art communities of England and Canada during the war, but firmly in the midst of propaganda and censorship programmes, making a clear link between the Fund and these other endeavours. Additionally, while the memorialising aspects of individual CWMF paintings and the proposed building have been discussed by a number of historians, the commemorative status of the exhibition itself has not. And, while the failure to build a permanent gallery has been the topic of a number works, this thesis aims to broaden the discussion, looking at both factual and conceptual explanations for why the Fund in its three manifestations – its art, its exhibitions, and its imagined gallery – could not sustain the interest of Canadians after the war.

Maria Tippett is perhaps the best known scholar who has used the Fund as a topic for exploration, and it is she who can perhaps be credited with much of the work in recent years to bring the history and activities of the Fund out of obscurity. In *Art at the Service of War: Canada, Art, and the Great War*, Tippett argues that before the First World War, much of what made up Canada's cultural being was representative of a particular place or region. Artists, writers, and musicians took their styles and their standards, and even their artistic, musical, and dramatic training, abroad. The opinions of foreign cultural critics were given more respect than those in the Canadian art community, and the country's private patrons preferred to collect foreign paintings, listen to foreign composers, and attend plays written by British playwrights. It was the same for the country's cultural bureaucrats she writes: "foreign works of art were favoured over local products in public galleries and concert halls across the country."[3]

It is Tippett's assertion that the Great War changed all of this. For Tippett, the art world in Canada was dramatically altered by war; it "shattered the sunny Edwardian world, shaking social mores and artistic conventions as well."[4] Canadian artists were changed by the war. Frederick Varley, for instance, commissioned by the CWMF to illustrate the war in Europe, altered his gentle landscape approach and began to produce profound critiques of the war's senselessness and brutality, as seen in his *For What?* (1918) and *The Sunken Road* (1919), in which the dead, decomposing bodies of soldiers are depicted openly. And it was this change in Canadian artists that Tippett sees as the most spectacular shift. The success of the war art program had not only changed the way Canadian artists worked; it actually strengthened their belief in their own judgments and perceptions. The result was an interwar blossoming of art in Canada in the work of the emerging Group of Seven.[5]

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[3] Maria Tippett, "Expressing Identity" *The Beaver* 80, no. 1 (February/March 2000): 20.
[4] Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War*, 108-9.

Tippett's assessment of the value of the art collection produced by the CWMF is valid. As a grouping of twentieth-century art, the Fund is unique not only because the work is united by theme, time and place, but because the collection surveys the broadest spectrum of Canadian and British painting of this important period. But this thesis will argue against the notion that the Fund provided a means by which Canadians were introduced, at least in a positive sense, to modernism. In addition, I maintain that the majority of the artists engaged in the project were not modernists at the time of their hiring, nor did most assume anything remotely resembling an avant-garde approach for their CWMF commissions. Moreover, the impact of modernist pieces in the Fund's collection on the average Canadian after about 1920 was negligible considering the extent to which the Fund's committee intentionally limited their numbers at exhibitions.

On the topics of nationalism, propaganda and collective memory in relation to the First World War, perhaps the best known source is Paul Fussell, whose 1975 *The Great War and Modern Memory* challenged the way that previous historians had viewed the war. Unlike earlier accounts which had stressed the war's heroic actions and grand victories, Fussell described a growing sense of fatigue, frustration and disillusionment that replaced a sense of adventure and responsibility with which Allied troops seemed at first to look upon their act of going to battle. Prolonged trench warfare, with its collective isolation, and the widespread belief among the troops that the war would never end, he argues, created certain modern trends in public thinking and awareness, including a prevailing sense of irony about the war, and a psychological polarisation of 'us' versus 'them', all of which he saw manifest in the writing of British soldier-poets during and after wartime.[6]

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[5] Maria Tippett, "Expressing Identity" *The Beaver* 80, no. 1 (February/March 2000): 20-1.

Richard Cork, also examining the growth of modernist cultural trends around the time of the Great War, echoes the position taken by Fussell when he states in his 1994 *A Bitter Truth: Avant-Garde Art and the Great War* that there was a marked trend in documenting war-related themes with a new and radical vision during the First World War. The outbreak of the war, he writes,

> coincided with an exceptional period of ferment and innovative vitality in western painting and sculpture. The proliferation of avant-garde movements in the pre-war years had testified to a quickening pace, with vociferous and often highly competitive groups committing themselves to the principle of extreme renewal.[7]

While Cork's study provides valuable insight into the evolution of these trends throughout many of the nations affected by the war, his primary focus on artists in England, Germany and France, leaves the unique Canadian situation largely unexamined, perhaps because Canada was still firmly part of the British Empire during the period he is studying, or because the evidence of a distinct shift to modernism in this country is not easily demonstrated.

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[6] Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), 75-6.

[7] Richard Cork, *A Bitter Truth: Avant-Garde Art and the Great War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 8.

Jay Winter's *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History*, written in the mid-1990s, provides a dramatic challenge to Fussell and Cork. Winter moves beyond Fussell's interpretation of the Great War as a phase in the onward ascent of modernism. He suggests that irony was in fact less capable of mediating grief than traditional language and ritual; that

> [i]rony's cutting edge…could express anger and despair, and did so in enduring ways; but it could not heal. Traditional modes of seeing the war, while at times less profound, provided a way of remembering which enabled the bereaved to live with their losses, and perhaps to leave them behind.[8]

Winter concludes that traditionalism stubbornly survived modernist forms of imagining the war, and it entailed everything the modernists rejected: "romanticism, old values, sentimentality, in sum, late-Victorian and Edwardian clichés about duty, masculinity [and] honour."[9]

Historian Jonathan Vance brings the issue of the Great War's impact on collective consciousness home to Canada in *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War*, continuing the challenge that had been set out by Winter. He prompts historians to rethink their ideas on the impact of the Great War by arguing convincingly that the post-war years saw the construction of a public memory that continued to reflect pre-war romanticisms even though Canada had welcomed home countless mentally and physically wounded men and had lost 66,000 more. Vance asserts that after the war, most civilians and veterans in Canada remained convinced that the suffering and sacrifice overseas had not been in vain, and that they had proven beneficial to those who fought, to the country, and to civilisation in general.[10]

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[8] Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 115.
[9] Ibid.

Vance refutes the position taken by Fussell and others, arguing that an accurate assessment of the impact of the war on literature cannot be made using only the works of a select few novelists and poets who chose to express their experiences through modernist critique.[11] This thesis will maintain Vance's view that to pronounce the CWMF a war art project that bravely portrayed the grim realities of trench warfare by assessing a few of its more modern or brave inclusions is to make the same mistake. The CWMF held few avant-garde images, the result of calculated efforts by its committee to direct the production of artists and a general unwillingness on the part of artists themselves to use controversial and disturbing artistic vocabularies to wrestle with their subject matter. In addition, the public generally responded with disdain and even outrage at the modernist pieces, indicating that the works did not help to frame the terms by which the Canadian public perceived or remembered the war.

This thesis will also draw upon some recent writing in Canada that has assessed the country's network of wartime information control. Because I will be arguing that Max Aitken and his war projects, namely the CWMF, were integral parts of Canada's web of propaganda and censorship efforts, Jeffrey Keshen's *Propaganda*

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[10] Jonathan Vance, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997) 89-90.

[11] Ibid., 90.

and Censorship During Canada's Great War proves particularly useful as a concise history of the development and impact of information control tactics employed by government, military officials and the press in Canada throughout the war. It is Keshen's assertion that in Canada, these agencies were able to exert an incredible and unprecedented amount of control over the transmission of war-related information. Their efforts created a kind of information vacuum in which Canadians lived largely unaware of the experiences of their soldiers at the front, and in which jingoistic notions of the glory of war continued to thrive.[12] Canada's rigid censorship programme, concludes Keshen, a result of efforts to eliminate information that threatened morale, "still ranks as among the most brazen affronts to democracy in the country's history."[13]

I have also made great use of some of the writing that has taken place around the role of monuments and memorials of the First World War. Michel Ragon's *The Space of Death: A Study of Funerary Architecture, Decoration, and Urbanism* (1983) provides an interesting starting point, as it serves as a theoretical examination of how societies have long relied on certain recognisable types of memorials, at first "conceived…as monuments to victory, they soon became monuments to suffering, to the memory of those who had gone off and had not come back, to the unlucky comrades, to the sons and fathers snatched from their land."[14] Ragon also draws fascinating links between monuments and museums by speculating that in many instances, monuments to the dead function very much like museums, arguing that societies "turn everything into a museum: old stones, old districts, old towns, and even the contemporary arts…[t]he cemetery,…"[15]

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[12] Jeffrey Keshen, *Propaganda and Censorship During Canada's Great War* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1996), 117.

[13] Ibid., 109.

[14] Michel Ragon (trans., Alan Sheridan), *The Space of Death: A Study of Funerary Architecture, Decoration, and Urbanism* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1983), 108.

More specific to the circumstances of Canada and World War I, Robert Shipley's 1987 *To Mark Our Place: A History of Canadian War Memorials* is more relevant. He maintains that Canada has been and continues to be very much a memorialising society, with monuments dedicated to historical figures, politicians, business leaders, and sports heroes, but he argues that the First World War has been by far the most dominant object of commemoration in this country.[16] Of the more than twelve hundred monuments listed in the author's research files, approximately sixty-six per cent were built after the First World War, twenty-six per cent after the Second World War, while only eight per cent were erected before or in memory of the Boer War.[17] It is Shipley's conclusion that monuments in Canada speak predominantly about suffering and were built with the overwhelming desire to mark grief at the loss of so many young men.[18] His position is echoed in an article by Alan Young entitled " 'We Throw the Torch': Canadian Memorials of the Great War and the Mythology of Heroic Sacrifice" (1989-90). Young acknowledges that monuments in Canada form part of the ritualisation of mourning; that they reflect notions of pride and heroism in order to comfort those who have lost, and to give meaning to that loss. He concludes, however, that despite their religiosity and their use of traditional symbolism, they were not designed to idealise war.[19] This thesis will aim to argue, contrary to both Young and Shipley, that Canadian memorials were indeed created for the most part with idealising as a central objective – in fact, venerating the war would have been extremely difficult if no attempt at idealisation were made. And it was because of their exceptionally successful ability to memorialise that Canadian monuments were able to overshadow the CWMF as a commemorative venture.

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[15] Ibid., 89.

[16] Robert Shipley, *To Mark Our Place: A History of Canadian War Memorials*, with a foreword by Pierre Berton (Toronto: New Canada Press Limited, 1987), 14.

[17] Ibid., 188.

[18] Ibid., 116.

An important issue addressed by this thesis is the power of the Canadian War Memorials Fund as an exhibition to influence Canadians' ideas about the war. In the introduction to *Thinking About Exhibitions*, a collection of essays released in 1996, the editors remark that

> [e]xhibitions are the primary site of exchange in the political economy of art, where signification is constructed, maintained and occasionally deconstructed. Part spectacle, part socio-historic event, part structuring device, exhibitions – especially exhibitions of contemporary art – establish and administer the cultural meanings of art.[20]

Equally useful to my discussion are the questions raised about the value of objects in society and the role of museums and galleries in preserving culturally-significant ~~items in~~ Susan Crane's *Museums and Memory*, published in 2000. Her discussion is relevant for her linkage of the topics of museums and memory. It is her assessment that museums play a major role in imbuing objects with meaning, and therefore, with the ability to impart memory to a culture.[21] These are important points to consider when examining the CWMF because the reality that the Fund's collection has never been permanently or adequately housed and displayed puts into question the Fund's capacity to preserve and promote Canadian war documents.

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[19] Alan Young, " 'We Throw the Torch': Canadian Memorials of the Great War and the Mythology of Heroic Sacrifice," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 24, no. 4 (Winter 1989-90): 19-20.

[20] Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W. Ferguson, and Sandy Nairn, eds., *Thinking About Exhibitions* (London: Routledge, 1996), 2.

Chapter one will begin the discussion of the Canadian War Memorials Fund by tracing the creation of the CWMF – its evolution from, and to a certain extent replacement of, earlier journalistic and photographic attempts to document World War I. This will entail a brief examination of the earlier activities of Canada's first official Eye-Witness, Max Aitken, who would be the Fund's creator. The place of the CWMF will be considered in the context of Canada's growing desire to record its own experiences at the Front. Although it is certainly up for debate whether 'Canada was born on Vimy Ridge' as many historians have claimed, the CWMF was part of a growing national awareness throughout the war and would not have come about if that trend had not existed.

With the groundwork set in chapter one, chapter two aims to delve more deeply into the activities of the Fund to explore its complexities – the many goals and aspirations for the Fund that were projected on it by Aitken and his organising committee, and the manner in which these goals and intentions came into conflict with one another and with the expectations for it held by its artists, the public, and art critics. Four of these will be highlighted in order to construct a better understanding of the many directions in which the Fund was being led: the aesthetic battle over the appropriateness of modernism to interpret the war for the public, the promotion of the Fund as a collection of war-related documents, its role as a propaganda tool during the war, and its function as a memorial after the war's end. An examination of all of these conflicting and overlapping purposes will require a closer look at the advertising used by CWMF officials to promote the project and its exhibitions, and the subsequent reaction of artists, critics and the general public. The chapter will conclude that despite the Fund's initial success, it was in the end a failure because it could not reconcile all of the competing and contradictory expectations for it that were held by so many. The third chapter will expand on the discussion in chapter two and will add a new dimension: the notion that, while the CWMF project as a whole was a failure, it did have promise as a memorial after the war. I will argue that the Fund failed in this respect also, partly because of the inability to give it a permanent home. Without a permanent exhibition space, the CWMF could not sustain itself as the kind of collection that people wanted to visit, learn from, and preserve.

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[21] Susan Crane, ed., *Museums and Memory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 2-3.

The Fund also failed as a memorial because it could not compete with the 'emotional landscapes' preferred by Canadians. This final discussion in chapter three will require an examination of some of the monuments that were built after the war, as these essentially replaced the CWMF. In addition, a discussion about personal and public remembrance is required in order to examine the differences between remembering and memorialising, to better understand the ways Canadians wished to construct their memories of the war. This chapter will conclude that memorials proved far more satisfying than the CWMF's travelling art collection because they met requirements that the Fund did not – only monuments could boast the powerful combination of monument and ritual, wherein they could stand as both the object of remembrance and the act of remembering.

CHAPTER 1

From Camera to Canvas

Although critical writing about the Canadian War Memorials Fund is far from exhaustive, the trend has been to view it as a project with well-defined intentions, run by a visionary named Max Aitken and embraced by the Canadian public after the war. This interpretation has tended to discount what was for the CWMF not always a smooth or entirely successful journey. The project was plagued by funding troubles, internal disagreements, and struggles to prove its worth to Canadians in the difficult inter-war years. This overview of the backdrop, creation and activities of the Fund will outline its establishment, and will profile the individuals who played a part in its creation, with a particular focus on the role of Sir Max Aitken, the future Lord Beaverbrook. Part of this examination will focus on the emergence of the Fund from earlier documentary-photography activities and will argue that a critical aspect of the Fund's creation lay in a general uneasiness in Canada concerning the benefits of the camera as a record-making tool. Also important will be an examination of the artists who took part in the project, the means by which they joined or were chosen to participate, and a description of the touring exhibitions that made up the most public aspect of the Fund's scheme.

Documenting the War

Throughout the nineteenth century, the Canadian government, particularly the Department of Militia and Defence, had proven reluctant to make use of photographic techniques to document the country at war. Despite the availability and increasing portability of camera equipment, as well as printing techniques which made the reproduction of photographs in newspapers and journals possible, few attempts were made to adopt photography as a documentary tool in Canada.[1] Many examples of documentary photographs that exist from this period were produced by British or American, rather than Canadian agencies and photographers, and therefore rarely depict scenes of particular interest to Canada. The general trend to overlook the possibilities of the camera for record-making continued and, as the opening battles of the First World War were raging overseas in 1914 and 1915, no efforts were made by the Canadian government to enlist photographers to travel to the Front with the country's troops and medical personnel.

In this country, the reluctance to make use of cameras can be traced, at least in part, to a prevalent attitude that held that photographs were unable to capture events with the requisite amount of compassion. Even after the turn of the century, many held the view that photographs were not suitable or adequate in documenting historically-significant events. "Reams of photographs, we know, cannot with even a distant approach to adequacy tell the tale" of war, wrote one columnist in an issue of *The Bookman* because, as "wonderful as many of the photographs of this war are, the camera cannot feel."[2] The complications that this attitude created were further compounded at the outbreak of the war by an equally strong belief that Canada's participation in the conflict needed to be documented. This latter desire was often thwarted by Britain, which still maintained considerable control over Canadian information services.

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[1] Peter Robertson, "Canadian Photojournalism during the First World War," *History of Photography* 2, no. 1 (January 1978): 37.

[2] Robert Holliday, "Posing the War for the Painter," *Bookman* 47 (July 1918): 515.

As such, limited efforts were made to secure positions for Canadian correspondents overseas. In August 1914, the Canadian Press Association was informed by its overseer, Britain's Colonial Office, that it would be permitted to send one news correspondent to the front-lines. This offer, however, was short-lived as it was revoked a mere ten days later by Lord Kitchener, Britain's War Minister. Already suspicious of the British press, Kitchener became even more convinced of the necessity of keeping wartime newsmen well restrained when the *London Times* reported on the unsanctioned withdrawal of Allied troops from Mons, in Belgium.[3] It seemed that Canadians wishing to capture the efforts of their soldiers at war now had to contend with a third problem; along with a widespread belief that the camera lacked the ability to suitably capture Canada's men at the front, and an unwillingness by the British government to give Canada more control over news production, came the problem of balancing journalism with the need for information control during the war.

It was not until the spring of 1915 that the accreditation of six British newsmen finally occurred. These correspondents were, however, under tight controls, stationed well away from the Front, and assigned military chaperones who ensured that the journalists were kept far away from the most sensitive areas and did not interview troops without advance permission. Correspondents were also required to submit to a complicated procedure during which the removal of militarily sensitive or upsetting material occurred before their stories could be published – this deleted information included troop locations, battalion strength, actual or rumoured maneuvers, criticism of plans or leaders, and reports of waning morale.[4]

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[3] Jeffrey Keshen, *Propaganda and Censorship During Canada's Great War* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1996), 28.

Eventually, rumours again circulated in Canada of finally getting a correspondent to accompany the country's troops overseas. Immediately a competition began amongst Canada's morning and evening daily newspapers to propose the best candidate for the job, but each felt that a journalist tied to a competing paper would give Front-line news stories to their former employer. It was up to the federal government, therefore, to make the final decision, and it did so, appointing a well-known Canadian newspaperman then living in Britain, William Maxwell Aitken, to the post of First World War Canadian Eye-Witness[5] (Figure 1). Aitken had thrown his energy into media and advertising efforts during the first months of the war, being deemed medically unfit for duty, but his attempts to land himself a reporting post on the front-lines initially garnered only refusals from the British government. His new position as Eye-Witness with the Canadian overseas forces now offered him the opportunity to serve as the Borden government's representative and as a publicist for the Canadian military.[6]

At the time of the war's outbreak, Aitken already possessed a wealth of knowledge about Canadian and British politics and information services. His extensive practical experience as publisher of mass-market daily newspapers (the London *Evening Standard*, the *Daily Express* and the *Sunday Express*), and his unabashed enthusiasm for all things Canadian, confirmed to many in Ottawa that he was the right person to provide news for the home-front.[7] Aitken's connections to the Canadian war effort went back to 1914, when he had been appointed Canada's unofficial delegate to the British War Office. This was followed in January 1915 by his promotion to the post of director of the Canadian War Records Office (CWRO), a job that involved the gathering of documents relating to the country's war effort: letters, official diaries, unit orders and dispatches prepared by every unit, and copies of all other documents relating to Canada's role in the conflict. The CWRO was set up under the Canadian Record and Casualty Department and was given $25,000 by the federal government, to which Aitken added considerable sums from his personal fortune to the project, proclaiming that the information he collected would help to build an extensive record of Canada's involvement in the war effort and a document of the country's growing role in world affairs.[8]

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[4] Ibid., 29.

[5] Ibid., 28.

[6] Jonathan Vance, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997), 164.

Aitken's new position as Canadian Eye-Witness proved perfectly in-step with his earlier activities, and it afforded him a unique opportunity to travel to France and Flanders and establish a connection with General Headquarters, while still maintaining a considerable level of autonomy at the front, and in his war reportage. He was able to move quite freely about the Canadian lines and because of this, the reports he submitted to Canadian officials in Ottawa gave an unparalleled account of the activities of the Canadian forces. In addition, he found that he was able to collect tremendous amounts of material for his Canadian War Records Office. As well as providing information to government officials and to the presses of Canada and Britain, Aitken dispatched news to the troops. From December 1915 onwards, his daily news bulletin, the *Canadian Daily Record*, kept soldiers in touch with what was happening at home in Canada.[9] Aitken described the publication as "an inverted form of publicity, for publicity in war has been understood to mean telling the people about the army; [but] the business of the 'Canadian Daily Record' is to tell the army about its people.[10]

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[7] Jeffrey Keshen, *Propaganda and Censorship During Canada's Great War*, 31.

[8] Ken Ramstead, "The 'Eye-Witness': Lord Beaverbrook and 'Canada in Flanders'," *Register* 5, no. 2 (Autumn 1984): 301.

At the end of 1915, Aitken's tour as Eye-Witness came to an end as more correspondents arrived at the Front, and he was free to devote more time to his position as Canadian War Records Officer. In January 1916, after a year of collecting material and depositing it in the vaults at his London office, he and his staff began to catalogue the items and papers. Before the end of the year, the Canadian government gave still more to the CWRO's operations with the contribution of more than sixty writers, researchers, camera operators, and support staff. Aitken's efforts to entertain and inform Canadian soldiers at the Front continued as well – through the publication of several more unit newspapers – and he made arrangements for film-makers to join the troops. It is not difficult to see how so much of the publicity that arose around Canada's war effort could be traced to the hard work and imagination of Max Aitken. The Canadian government even received complaints that coverage of the country's war effort was overshadowing that of Britain and the rest of her allies. A reporter for the *Manchester Guardian* remarked in December 1919, for instance, that it was "long open to doubt whether there was anybody but Canadians fighting in France."[11]

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[9] Jonathan Vance, *Death So Noble*, 164.

[10] Lord Beaverbrook, *Canadian War Records Office Reports – 1916-1919, including a Report of the Executive Committee of the Canadian War Memorials Fund* (London: publisher unknown, 1919), 7.

His next project involved combining many of the notes and reports he had written as Canadian Eye-Witness, along with photographs, maps and official documents gathered by his War Records Office, into a book entitled *Canada in Flanders*, his account of the experience of Canada's troops in the first months of the war.[12] He financed the book's publication himself, and gave the profits to support the war effort.[13] It was in the writing and publishing of the book that Aitken realised that there still existed a scarcity of photographs of the Front and of the fighting men. He was prompted to employ artists to illustrate many sections of the first volume of the book, since he could locate no photographic records dealing with Canada's participation in any of the actions that had taken place in 1915, including the Second Battle of Ypres, and the battles of St. Eloi, St. Julien and Givenchy (Figure 2). In March 1915, Routine Order Number 189 had commanded the withdrawal of all cameras from the Front, leaving no British or Canadian photographers, neither professional nor amateur, in the war zones.[14] The fact that so many battles in the war's early period had escaped visual recording seemed especially unfortunate to those such as Aitken, anxious that the Canadian contribution in the war effort be recognised.[15]

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[11] December 23, 1919 *Manchester Guardian* quoted in Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War: Canada, Art, and the Great War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 21.

[12] *Canada in Flanders* was first published in 1915, and a second volume was released in 1916.

[13] Anne Chisholm and Michael Davie, *Lord Beaverbrook: A Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), 127.

[14] The text of Routine Order No. 189, issued by the First Canadian Division command to all units on the 20th of March 1915, had stated that "under no circumstances must photographs be taken of any Headquarters, observing stations, views showing the position or nature of artillery, aerodromes, etc." The general reasoning was that, "should the photographs fall into the enemy's hand, [they] might be of value to him." 1st Canadian Division Routine Orders, Vol. 1, dealing with Routine Order Nos. 189, 361 and 422, quoted in Peter Robertson, "Canadian Photojournalism during the First World War," 38. A number of artists and newspaper illustrators had attempted to fill the photographic void of Canada's stand at Ypres, for instance, by reconstructing the events of April and May 1915. But their reconstructions demonstrated their ignorance of the conditions under which the men at the front were living and fighting. As critic C. Lewis Hind observed, their images lacked "conviction, the scenes

The absence of first-hand photographs resulted in numerous instances of unsatisfactory reconstructions by illustrators, as well as countless faked films and photographs (Figure 3). One Canadian official complained that countless "sensational war pictures of the 'fake' variety [are] being exhibited all over Canada."[16] Photographers and their technicians employed the soft focus lens, and introduced dark-room techniques such as removing, outlining, and foreshortening in order to manipulate images. The appearance of these often unsubtle reconstructions led Canadians to become even more distrustful of photographic renderings of the war, and many came to feel that the camera was a tool that could too easily be used to manipulate rather than document.

The Establishment of the CWMF

The problematic nature of war photography and photographers' limited access to the Front after 1915 led Aitken to expand his use of war art beyond the illustrations he commissioned for *Canada in Flanders*. Inspired by British and Australian war art schemes, Aitken established the Canadian War Memorials Fund (CWMF) in November 1916, under the umbrella of his Canadian War Records Office (CWRO). Artists of Canadian, British, Australian, Belgian and Serbian nationality were hired to

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have not been witnessed and they…are worked up from collected material." C. Lewis Hind, "War's Failure to Inspire the Modern Artist," *Current Opinion* 59 (August 1915): 123.

[15] Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War*, 21.

[16] Deputy minister of Militia and Defence Eugene Fiset, quoted in Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War*, 22.

paint events that had already taken place in the first years of the war, or to record events as they happened. Artists chosen were given honorary rank with the Canadian Expeditionary Forces (CEF) and were paid for the length of their hiring, or were given a specific sum for each work they produced. The Canadian government invested $25,000 in the new project, and additional sums were contributed by Aitken and the CWMF's co-founder, Harold Harmsworth – Lord Rothermere – the owner of the London *Observer* and *Daily Mail* newspapers. Aitken was able to provide for additional costs such as artists' materials and travel expenses through the sale of CWRO publications, films, and photographs.[17]

The official application was made at the London County Council on November 7th, 1916 to create the CWMF, and ten days later the request was approved; Rothermere became the Fund's chairman, and Aitken and another fellow newspaperman, Bertrand Lima, were established as committee members. Sir Edmund Walker, Chair of the National Gallery of Canada's Board of Trustees (Figure 4), and Eric Brown, that institution's director, were retained as consultants. Aitken and Lord Rothermere then took on one final CWMF committee member, Paul Konody, art critic at Lord Rothermere's own *Observer* newspaper, as the project's artistic adviser.[18] A well-known art historian and critic, Konody had written books on

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[17] Maria Tippett, *Canada, Art and Propaganda During the Great War* – Canada House Lecture Series No. 44 (London: Canadian High Commission, 1989), 2.

[18] It is difficult to ascertain exactly how much remuneration Konody received for his service as art advisor to the CWMF, but what is known is that Konody's appointment to the Fund was greeted with controversy. The British Royal Academy made its position immediately clear to Aitken that it would only offer its artists to the programme if it received a guarantee that Konody would not be prominently associated with the Fund or its exhibitions. This request was most likely the result of Konody's earlier predisposition to attack the Academy in his articles in the *Observer*. It is not known why he agreed to the condition – perhaps he was content enough to play a role in the project. Despite his hard work, in the end the concession to the Academy was fulfilled and the CWMF committee omitted his name from the exhibition catalogues. Additionally, Konody was not publicly thanked at

Walter Crane and Velasquez, and had been the editor of the prestigious *Artist* and *Connoisseur* magazines from 1900 to 1909.[19]

Artists would be hired under the new scheme, Aitken stated, to provide "suitable memorials in the form of Tablets, Oil-Paintings, etc., to the Canadian Heroes and Heroines in the war," and his first commission aimed to do just that.[20] The British portrait painter Richard Jack was employed to paint an enormous canvas depicting *The Second Battle of Ypres*, where Canadians, in their first major engagement on the Western Front in April 1915, had been able to retain their positions against considerable German opposition. Jack's finished painting was an impressive twenty feet wide, and was described by a proud Aitken as "a most wonderful battle scene"[21] (Figure 5). Despite considerable research and a visit to the former battlefield, however, Jack's painting looked like the unfortunate heroic 'reconstructions' made by earlier illustrators and photographers; Canadian soldiers were shown, for instance, fighting from behind a wall of sandbags rather than from trenches, and a bandaged officer is seen standing up in the midst of the gunfire to urge his troops forward.

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the exhibition's first opening ceremony in London; though he was present, he was not invited onto the delegates' platform and was not included in the official recognition ceremony. Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War*, 31, 126. What appears to be the closest to official recognition that Konody received came when Aitken submitted his official CWRO report to the Canadian government in late 1919: "To Mr. P. G. Konody the Committee owes a large debt of gratitude for his brilliant and unwavering services as Adviser an all matters of Art." Lord Beaverbrook, *Canadian War Records Office Reports – 1916-1919*, 8. In 1920, as the CWMF's financial situation was becoming ever more dire, Konody and several other employees were dismissed without warning. Konody wrote angrily to Eric Brown in 1921 that he no longer wished to "work and waste my time on completing the collection, considering that my three years of strenuous and absolutely gratuitous effort have brought me no sort of acknowledgement." Paul Konody quoted in Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War*, 101.

[19] Ibid., 30-1.

[20] Max Aitken quoted in Richard Cork, *A Bitter Truth: Avant-Garde Art and the Great War* (*New* Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 204.

[21] Ibid.

With the establishment of the CWMF complete by the end of 1916, Aitken began to structure the project towards the production of large, dramatic pieces in keeping with the first commission by Richard Jack. This decision resulted in considerable disagreement between Aitken and fellow committee members, National Gallery Director Eric Brown, and trustee chair Sir Edmund Walker, who was also chair of Canada's Fine Arts Council.[22] Both men were mystified by Aitken – by now Lord Beaverbrook, with his elevation to the British House of Lords in 1917 – a man who freely admitted a lack of knowledge about the art community, who was still able to convince the Canadian government to contribute another $15,000 toward his project when the National Gallery's own budget had been slashed by 1916.[23]

Walker and Brown were also displeased with Lord Beaverbrook's desire to commission mostly well-known British painters, rather than Canadians, and his interest in producing large, finished battle-scenes, rather than small sketches which could be turned into finished pieces at a later time. Walker told Beaverbrook that the Fund's artists should not undertake grand paintings but should instead be directed to produce small pieces,[24] but Beaverbrook was convinced that finished works needed to be completed during the course of the war, when war-charity money was easily raised and when artists proved so willing to participate. He wrote that by "securing these pictures at the present time," the CWMF was "benefiting from the flood of patriotism now existent, which inspires the highest efforts. If we left the question of purchase until after the War, I am sure they would cost us tens of thousands more than they are costing us now."[25]

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[22] Newton MacTavish, "Sir Edmund Walker's Collection of Art," *Canadian Magazine* 52 (1919): 833.

[23] Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War: Canada, Art, and the Great War*, 9.

[24] Ibid., 37.

Pressure by National Gallery officials to hire more Canadian artists, however, did have an effect on Beaverbrook, as did their contention that painters should be hired to record a wide range of wartime activities, not just battle scenes. In Eric Brown's view, the depiction of the current war should include "every phase of the changed life of the people during the great struggle, from the farmer girls plowing in the fields to the sittings of the War Cabinet, and from Canadian lumbermen cutting historic timber in Windsor Park to the camouflaging of soldiers' huts behind the lines in France."[26]

Brown's comments led Beaverbrook to add two new aspects to the Fund's existence – the work of women artists, and the depiction of home front-activities – two facets of World War I documentary that were often to go hand in hand.[27] Laura Knight, Clare Atwood, Anna Airy, Charles Shannon, and many other civilian artists were commissioned to paint, for a set fee, specific works relating to the activities of the Canadian Forces at home and in Britain: the production of food and munitions, the training of soldiers, coastal defence efforts, ship-building, and so on. Beaverbrook also hired James Kerr-Lawson and British artists David Cameron and Gyrth Russell, and Percy Wyndham Lewis, Alfred Bastien, and James Quinn were shortly afterwards loaned to the CWMF from the British, Belgian, and Australian forces respectively.[28]

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[25] Lord Beaverbrook quoted in Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War*, 37.

[26] Eric Brown, "Canadian War Art to Order," *The Christian Science Monitor* 10, no. 291 (November 4, 1918): 4(?).

[27] Canadian War Records Office, *Catalogue of Pictures, Sculpture, Drawings, Etchings and Lithographs Done by Canadian Artists in Canada – Held Under the Authority of the Canadian War Memorials Fund* – exhibition catalogue [Ottawa(?): National Gallery of Canada(?), 1919], prefatory note.

There are few surviving records that shed light on the manner in which artists were chosen to participate in the Canadian War Memorials Fund project, though it does appear that there was no official selection process in place. Some artists such as Harold Mowatt, Percy Wyndham Lewis, David Bomberg and William Roberts offered their services to the committee, stating that they simply wanted an opportunity to paint the war overseas. British artist Gerald Moira, wrote that he "should certainly like to go to France…to know the conditions under which artists are sent to the Front."[29] Other artists were made known to the committee through personal friendships with Paul Konody or Beaverbrook, or had worked on previous Canadian War Records Office publications, such as Dudley Hardy, Harold Piffard, Leonard Richmond, and Norman Wilkinson.[30]

Depending on how the CWMF committee assessed the skills, reputation and availability of artists, they were either asked to complete specific commissions for larger paintings or were dispatched overseas for predetermined time periods to work in the field. Four of the Canadian artists (Fred Varley, William Beatty, Charles Simpson and Maurice Cullen) were given official status together with the rank and pay of an army captain.[31] In a publication released by Lord Rothermere, both he and

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[28] Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War*, 30.

[29] Gerald Moira quoted in Laura Brandon and Dean Oliver, *Canvas of War: Painting the Canadian Experience, 1914-1945*, with a foreword by Jack Granatstein (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2000), xii.

[30] Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War*, 30.

[31] Laura Brandon and Dean Oliver, *Canvas of War*, 62. The total number of artists associated with the Fund by the time of the scheme's termination in 1921 was 116. This comprised 1 Dane, 3 Belgians, 2 Australians, 1 Serbian, 66 British, and 43 Canadians. For a complete list of artists

Beaverbrook enumerated some of the artists making up the Fund's roll and the assignment each received:

> Battles - - Major Richard Jack, A. R. A. Capt. Louis Weirter.
> Mr. Eric Kennington. Private Bomberg.
> Artillery - - Lieut. Wyndham Lewis.
> Infantry - - Mr. J. W. Morrice.
> Cavalry - - Mr. A. J. Munnings.
> Veterinary Corps - Mr. A. Talmage.
> Air - - Mr. C. R. W. Nevinson.
> ...
> Munition Works - Lieut. I. C. Ginner.
> Hospitals - - Prof. G. Moira.
> Battlefields and Ruins - Major D. Y. Cameron, A. R. A.
> Major Kerr-Lawson
> Allegories - - Mr. C. Sims, R. A. Mr. Byam Shaw
> Sig. Ettore Tito,...[32]

Despite the scope of subject matter implied by the excerpt above, of the forty-five artists employed by the CWMF in Britain during 1917, nearly half were engaged in the production of portraits of Victoria Cross recipients and officials: Sir Robert Borden, Sir George Perley, Sir Edward Kemp, along with many of the British and Canadian forces' admirals and generals were scheduled to be painted[33] (Figure 6).

In addition, an examination of CWMF records reveals that artists were often asked to paint subjects with which they had little or no experience, and were rarely consulted on these decisions. It appears that no one asked Canadian A. Y. Jackson, for instance, what kind of painting he had done before the war, and the first task of his new commission was to paint a portrait of Corporal Kerr, a Victoria Cross

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employed and the titles of their works, see R.F. Wodehouse, *A Check List of the War Collections of World War I, 1914-1918 and World War II, 1939-1945* [Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada (Queen's Printer)], 1968.

[32] Lord Rothermere, *The Housing of the Canadian War Memorials* – brochure (London: by the author, 1919), 2-3.

[33] Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War*, 34.

recipient in the 49th Battalion. When he mentioned that he was a landscape painter, no one, not even Kerr himself, seemed too concerned.[34] The Vorticist painter William Roberts was confronted with a similar situation. When he met Konody in London to settle the details of his commission, Roberts was informed that all subjects except one had been handed out and that he would be required to paint the first gas attack on the Canadian troops at the Second Battle of Ypres (Figure 7). Roberts wrote that he accepted the commission despite considerable trepidation over his lack of experience with that kind of warfare.[35]

Given that poison gas had been seen on the battlefields for the first time in 1915, it certainly would have been difficult for Roberts to gain any pre-war experience with this subject. Nonetheless, he was taking a risk in accepting the commission. Without any means to research the event and lacking first-hand experience he ran the danger of producing an image reminiscent of those of Richard Jack, based on assumptions about what war on the Western Front was like, and steeped in the conventions of traditional battle painting. Additionally, Roberts was told by CWMF committee members that he would have to alter his pre-war Vorticist style in order to produce something more comprehensible. "I would be glad to know whether, providing you are given the necessary facilities and leave, you are prepared to paint the picture at your own risk, to be submitted for the approval of the committee," read a letter to the artist from the Canadian War Records Office. "The reason for this request is that the Art Adviser [Konody] informs us that he is not quite acquainted with your realist work and Cubist work is inadmissible for the purpose."[36]

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[34] A. Y. Jackson, "Reminiscences of Army Life, 1914-1918," *Canadian Art* XI, no. 1 (Autumn 1953): 8.

[35] Richard Cork, *A Bitter Truth*, 209.

Part of the difficulty encountered in the pairing of artists with subject-matter and style resulted from the fact that, despite Konody's familiarity with the art world, Beaverbrook was a complete novice, announcing at one of Christopher Nevinson's private art exhibitions that "Mr. Nevinson's art pleases [me] greatly, though [I can] not tell why by any process of reasoning. All [I can say is that I] felt its influence in [my] heart."[37] While Beaverbrook took an interest in the artists he commissioned, he made it very clear that Paul Konody had been hired to advise him on all matters concerning the style and abilities of his painters. But Konody's commitment to the painting of the Great War also had limitations. He believed Canadian artists lacked the sophistication of their European counterparts, stating that "Canadian art is of comparatively recent growth and draws its strength from Parisian soil."[38]

And, although generally supportive of the artists involved in avant-garde movements, Konody was notably intolerant of the Vorticists, the most radical movement in British painting, and he wrote harshly of the work of Percy Wyndham Lewis and David Bomberg, describing their pre-war paintings as "geometrical obfuscations." He allowed both to work for the CWMF project on a provisional basis.[39] Like Bomberg and Wyndham Lewis, the modern artists that were permitted to participate in the programme were chosen primarily because they were well known – Beaverbrook and his associates felt that artists of stature would bring needed recognition to the Fund. It was also decided that, even those painters who might be considered outside the boundaries acceptable by the committee, could be monitored and guided into producing works that would meet the Fund's requirements.

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[36] Lord Rothermere quoted in Richard Cork, *A Bitter Truth*, 209.

[37] Lord Beaverbrook quoted in Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War*, 33-4.

[38] Paul Konody, "The Canadian War Memorials," *Colour Magazine* 9, no. 2 (September 1918): 36.

[39] Paul Konody quoted in Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War*, 31.

By the fall of 1917, the majority of CWMF artists had been selected and those such as David Cameron, Gerald Moira and William Rothenstein who were chosen to paint subjects overseas, joined the troops and remained with them until the end of the war in November 1918, travelling from Passchendaele to the Vimy-Lens front, then south to Amiens, and finally northeast to Mons. But, much like the wartime correspondents who had gone before them, Fund artists were usually located far behind the front lines. They were given attendants and drivers, and unlike other military officers, had no set duties.[40] As painter William Rothenstein described, the official war artists existed as "a kind of official parasite, with nothing to do but to draw and draw and no material worries to prevent him working all day and every day save such transitory things as shells."[41] Only A. Y. Jackson, Percy Wyndham Lewis, William Roberts, C. R. W. Nevinson, and John and Paul Nash, and a few others who had served in some capacity on the line, had any experience of day-to-day life in the trenches.

Artists also discovered rather quickly that practically any and all subjects of interest in a war zone were either on the move, quickly over, or concealed in darkness. They often found they had to work quickly, and many who wished to remain at the front to complete work found their requests denied when their cars or their accommodations were needed. Another challenge for the artists was that their work had to meet certain standards. These ranged from requirements established by a Canadian military intelligence officer who warned A. Y. Jackson not to "publish gun positions or such objects in relation to a recognizable landmark," to the much more precise limits set by the CWMF's organisers.[42] Konody assigned most of the Fund's artists to specific subjects, among them military hospitals, lumber camps, railroad construction camps, veterinary units, and the Canadian Cavalry, while Sir Edmund Walker and Eric Brown were charged with assigning subjects to home-front artists. Then, after viewing the finished product, the three would accept it, reject it, or decide what changes were needed.

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[40] Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War*, 53.
[41] William Rothenstein quoted in Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War*, 53.

The CWMF Exhibitions

Many artists had finished their Canadian War Memorials Fund commissions by the autumn of 1918. Their pictures were stored on the premises of the Royal Academy of Art, at a number of art galleries in London, and in the artists' own studios. By December of that year, Beaverbrook and his committee had collected nearly four hundred paintings, lithographs, etchings and sculptures, and few had been seen by the Canadian or British publics; a small number of paintings had been reproduced in one of the CWRO's periodicals, *Canada in Khaki* (Figure 8) as well as in the September 1918 issue of the art magazine *Colour*. The CWMF was planning an official unveiling of the collection at a major exhibition to be hosted by the Royal Academy in London.[43]

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[42] A. Y. Jackson quoted in Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War*, 55.
[43] Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War*, 76.

The CWMF exhibition opened at Burlington House in London on January 4th, 1919, to a crowd of about two thousand people, who came to see how the Canadians had memorialised, with paint, pencil and bronze, their contribution to the First World War effort. The audience was led past the main courtyard, up to the central gallery where they waited to hear speeches from the assembled dignitaries. Sir Edward Kemp, the minister for the Overseas Military Forces of Canada, introduced the most prestigious guest, Canadian Prime Minister Sir Robert Borden, who had taken a short break from his preparations for the Paris Peace Conference to attend the ceremony.[44]

Borden told the crowd that "the dawn of a New Year, a year of victory and peace" had come, and it was fitting "that Art, the handmaiden of civilization, should be called upon to interpret the meaning of the war as it was and as it would be understood."[45] Lord Beaverbrook, sharing the platform with Lord Rothermere, Sir George and Lady Perley (the Canadian Overseas Minister and his wife), and Sir George Foster, the Canadian Minister of Trade, received praise for his foresight, his incredible energy and his administrative talents. The artists themselves were then recognised for having made "the task a labour of love." At that point Beaverbrook rose, paying "high tribute to Lord Rothermere and others associated with him," who had helped to organise an exhibition which, in his mind, "symbolized and illustrated the meaning of war and the cause for which the Empire [had] fought."[46]

The exhibition was deemed a success and the reviews immediately following the show generally proclaimed it an extraordinary event. It was acknowledged to be a broad collection of war records which featured not only the Fund's collection of paintings and sculptures, but also war trophies collected by Arthur Doughty, the official Canadian government archivist, the CWRO's photographs, and displayed around the exhibition buildings, large guns and airplanes collected from battlefields or captured from German posts. For the first three days of the exhibition, even the Prince of Wales was in attendance, further adding to the momentous mood.

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[44] Maria Tippett, *Canada, Art and Propaganda During the Great War*, 4.

[45] Sir Robert Borden quoted in Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War*, 77.

[46] January 8, 1919 *Canadian Daily Record* quoted in Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War*, 78.

The timing of the first Canadian War Memorials Exhibition was excellent. Post-war mood in the Allied nations was generally high and for the Canadians especially, the last phase of the war had won a new level of prestige for the country and its soldiers. The exhibition was viewed by Beaverbrook and his committee, as well as by the Canadian government, as an excellent opportunity to honour these men and to pay tribute to their bravery.[47]

The major attractions of the exhibition were found in the main gallery, where the crowd had watched the opening ceremonies. Augustus John's ten-by-forty-foot charcoal drawing *The Canadians Opposite Lens*, took centre-stage. It was described by Konody as "an epitome of modern war."[48] The incredible work featured crowds of refugees, detachments of soldiers in uniform, multitudes of horses, trucks, and casualties, camouflaged guns, observation balloons, a ruined château, and Vimy Ridge itself in a grand montage. In the same room, Richard Jack's *The Second Battle of Ypres*, Charles Shannon's portrait of *H. R. H. Princess Patricia of Connaught*, Laura Knight's *Physical Training at Whitley Camp* and two seascapes by Julius

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[47] Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War*, 77.
[48] Paul Konody, "The Canadian War Memorials," 29.

Olsson and Norman Wilkinson (Figure 9), were displayed, as well as Derwent Wood's bronze sculpture entitled *Canada's Golgotha*[49] (Figure 10).

Another space was allocated to prints – etchings, lithographs and dry-points – while Alfred Munnings' paintings depicting the activities of the Canadian cavalry division were given their own room (Figure 11). Drawings commissioned by Beaverbrook from a British architect named E. A. Rickards were also on display, showing visitors what a planned war art gallery to house the collection would look like (Figure 12). Conspicuously, the works of the modern artists such as Wyndham Lewis and William Roberts were separated from the rest of the collection and were displayed as 'decorative panels.' Souvenirs of the exhibition were also available, in the form of limited-edition reproductions of selected prints and paintings, and plaster or bronze models of several of the collection's sculptures. A gift-book was also sold, entitled *Art and War: Canadian War Memorials*, and it featured forty-eight brilliant colour reproductions of some of the most popular images at the CWMF displays.

Following the London display, a small portion of Beaverbrook's staff remained at the London office to oversee the sale of CWRO photographs still touring England, while Captain Percy Godenrath, formerly in charge of the CWRO's photography exhibitions in London, was given the responsibility of accompanying CWMF's paintings and sculptures to New York, where the collection was again exhibited in June at the Anderson Galleries. Once there, he oversaw the installation of the exhibition and arranged for advertising. He was also under orders to sell the CWMF's etchings and reproductions, to collect entrance fees, and, as much as possible, to secure free assistance and advertising in order the keep the Fund's costs down.[50]

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[49] Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War*, 78.

Paul Konody also travelled to New York. Having been newly promoted from CWMF art advisor to art director, he was now charged, alongside Godenrath, with organising and advertising the exhibitions. Shortly after arriving in New York he sent a promotional letter to arts organisations and newspapers praising the CWMF collection as "the most complete artistic record of any country's share in the great war, and the most significant manifestation of artistic activity during this period." He wrote numerous articles in the following weeks commending the collection's inclusion of a broad range of artistic styles, the activities at the Front of its soldier-artists, and the planned memorial building that would house it, making Ottawa what he called "a place of pilgrimage for art students and art lovers."[51]

In August 1919, the CWMF's touring exhibition was finally brought home, to the Canadian National Exhibition in Toronto (Figure 13). Again the Fund saw initial success in the form of attendance and profits. The galleries were crowded continuously and at the end of two weeks, 107,865 Canadians had passed through the gates, paying over $25,000 to view the works displayed. The touring show then made its way to Montréal, where it was hosted in October by that city's Art Association. Concurrently, the home-front images that had been completed remained in Toronto where they were displayed at the Art Gallery of Toronto. The CWMF collection's appearance in Toronto and Montréal was intended to show Canadians themselves how significant their contribution to the war had been and how Canada had grown through the four years of conflict, not just politically or economically, but culturally as well.[52]

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[50] Ibid., 87.

[51] Paul Konody quoted in Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War*, 88.

Extensive promotion of the show, as well as the popular souvenirs sold to visitors, resulted in overwhelmingly positive reviews in newspapers and journals throughout 1919. As Maria Tippett describes, the early success of the Canadian War Memorials Fund exhibitions had much to do with the mood in post-war Britain and Canada, since the majority of people in both countries were curious to see anything war-related; during wartime, censorship laws had dramatically controlled the information and images released to the public. In addition, the CWMF exhibitions benefited from the desire by recently returned soldiers to show their friends and family some of what the war experience had been like.[53]

During this high point in the CWMF exhibition cycle, Beaverbrook and Rothermere began to solidify their plans to house the collection in an art gallery of its own in Ottawa. They believed that profits would continue to materialise, and that the Canadian Government would be willing to aid in their efforts. While Sir Edmund Walker and Eric Brown of the National Gallery had disagreed with many aspects of Beaverbrook's scheme, they agreed that the Fund's success would most likely mean the procurement of a gallery. Unbeknownst to Beaverbrook, however, they were thinking more along the lines of a permanent national gallery for the country, into which the CWMF collection could be incorporated. For Brown and Walker, the possibility of a gallery was a critical factor in their support of Beaverbrook's scheme from early on. After the Centre Block of the Houses of Parliament was destroyed by fire in February 1916, the government had moved its offices to a temporary home in the Victoria Memorial Museum, pushing the National Gallery's collection into a single room.

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[52] Maria Tippett, *Canada, Art and Propaganda During the Great War*, 87-88.
[53] Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War*, 79.

As its exhibitions continued to tour, the CWMF garnered less and less attention and incurred steadily increasing debt. By the end of 1919, the Fund's reserves were dangerously low and Paul Konody, having returned to Britain at the end of 1919, found himself back on the Fund's advertising campaign, bringing the last group of CWMF pictures to be completed from London to Canada for exhibition. These works, along with the Canadian home-front paintings and sculptures shown at the Art Gallery of Toronto the previous autumn, went on display at the 1920 Canadian National Exhibition. The show was organised to raise money in support of the planned exhibition dates still to come and to pay artists for works newly completed. It was strategically given the theme of *the final triumph of allied and more particularly Canadian arms*, for which the strong commemorative tone of the display was set by George Clausen's *Returning to the Reconquered Land* and William Rothenstein's *The Watch on the Rhine*. The few modernist exceptions in the show were David Bomberg's *Sappers at Work: A Canadian Tunnelling Company* (altered as per orders from the CWMF committee – Figure 14), Paul Nash's *Night Bombardment,* and John Turnbull's *Air-Fight.*[54]

Another stop in Montréal in 1920 garnered considerably less interest than it had the year before. Attendance was so poor that only a hundred dollars per day was earned in entrance fees. This exhibition was followed in early 1923 and again in

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[54] Ibid., 95.

1924 by shows at the National Gallery of Canada, still housed in the Victoria Memorial Museum in Ottawa. These displays were, like the home-front images exhibition held in Toronto several years before, organised almost exclusively to gain popular and financial support for the Fund. Nearly in dire straits by this time, the CWMF was in a double bind since its committee was further straining the budget to plan for the immense $1,250.000 gallery to permanently house the collection.[55]

By the end of 1924, it was becoming clear to Lord Beaverbrook and his fellow Fund organisers that the momentum that had sustained the collection's touring exhibition immediately after the war was ebbing. William Lyon Mackenzie King, Canada's new prime minister, had been made aware of the Fund's financial struggles and asked that the country's public-minded citizens respond to the call to preserve the collection. However, it was generally felt that public money could not be allocated to a gallery in financially-depressed times. Sir Robert Borden had previously shown some enthusiasm for displaying the collection by stating publicly that "it would be necessary that the great collection of pictures should be properly housed," but that was only months after the Armistice in 1918, when feelings of triumph and patriotic pride were still high.[56]

One final attempt was made to promote the official war art building when the National Gallery of Canada was asked to host a show in 1934. The exhibition's catalogue was titled *Lest We Forget* and featured high-quality colour plates and inspirational messages from Lt.-Col. R. F. Parkinson, who had been Director of the

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[55] Ibid., 96.
[56] Ibid., 101.

CWRO, and Captain Percy Godenrath.[57] But not until the Second World War did it appear that the CWMF might again receive recognition after nearly two decades in storage. H. O. McCurry, who had become the National Gallery's director upon the death of Eric Brown in 1939, began construction in 1940 of an exhibition hall on the ground floor of the Victoria Memorial Museum, in which he arranged for the Fund's art works to be continuously displayed until the close of the war.[58]

With the end of World War II, however, enthusiasm for the war art once again diminished, and confusion and disagreement resurfaced amongst the government agencies involved as to what to do with the Fund's works. Cabinet ordered that the CWMF again be deposited with the National Gallery in 1946 and there the paintings joined those produced by the Canadian War Artists' Committee during the Second World War, in storage. Both collections remained un-catalogued and – apart from a small rotating exhibition on the gallery's sixth floor – out of sight. This situation improved somewhat in 1960 when the collections were given a curator, Stuart Smith, but it was Major R. F. Wodehouse, appointed to this post in 1962, who did much to revitalise the collection. First, he documented all the works, a task that resulted in a 1968 publication, *A Check List of the War Collections of World War I, 1914-1918 and World War II, 1939-1945*. That year, he also initiated a joint project between the National Gallery and the Department of National Defence to record Canada's post-war military endeavours.[59] More recently, a nearly complete War Museum building in Ottawa, under construction since 2003, is scheduled for official opening in May of 2005. The huge bunker-style structure, with an astounding 62,000 square feet of permanent exhibition space, and an additional 7,500 square feet for special temporary display, holds further promise that the CWMF collection will again be exhibited, if not in its entirety, at least more consistently.[60]

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[57] Captain Percy Godenrath, *Lest We Forget: The Story of the Canadian War Memorials Collection of Art – the Gift of the Army to the Nation* – exhibition catalogue, with a foreword by Lt.-Col. R. F. Parkinson (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1934), 5.

[58] Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War*, 111.

[59] Anonymous editorial comment in R. F. Wodehouse, "Lord Beaverbrook's Plan for a Suitable Building to House the Canadian War Memorials," *Organization of Military Museums in*

The Canadian War Memorials Fund, an impressive collection of war art, evolved out of early-war assumptions in Canada about the limitations of photography to capture accurately and adequately the activities of the country's soldiers in France and Flanders. The CWMF, as Lords Beaverbrook and Rothermere and their fellow committee members envisioned it, was a project that would provide much-needed visual records of the war, while appealing to the sensibilities of many who doubted the camera's abilities. In its early years, the exhibitions of the collection that toured sites in Britain, the United States and Canada, proved successful in providing a means by which a wide range of viewers experienced what strict censorship laws had for so many years withheld. But, as will be demonstrated in the chapter to follow, the activities of the CWMF were marked by considerable confusion and controversy.

Canada publication II (1978-9): 1. In 1971, the National Gallery gave most of the World War I art works to the Canadian War Museum. The National Gallery retained works by Paul Nash, Percy Wyndham Lewis, Frederick Varley, Edward Wadsworth, David Bomberg, William Roberts and a number of others. Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War*, 132.

[60] Canadian War Museum website http://www.warmuseum.ca; accessed 2 February 2005.

CHAPTER 2

A Tangle of Intentions

As briefly discussed in the preceding history of its activities, the Canadian War Memorials Fund was created to fulfill a number of different functions. In his 1919 brochure publicising the Fund and the planned gallery to house it, Lord Rothermere outlined some of the project's diverse aims:

> In planning and organizing the great Scheme of the Canadian War Memorials, the Committee were guided throughout by three main considerations. The first of these was naturally that the memorials should constitute as complete a historical-artistic record as possible of Canada's share in the great War. The second; that this record should be thoroughly representative of all the varied and somewhat diametrically opposed tendencies and movements of Western Art at the time of the tremendous armed conflict, so that the collection should not assume a parochial character. The third and equally important aim was, to provide for an impressive and monumental setting, a great War Memorial in itself, planned in relation to the Works of Art to be housed in it, so as to avoid the wearisome monotony of the ordinary picture gallery with its long unbroken rows of architecturally unrelated exhibits.[1]

As Rothermere explains, several considerations were key in how the CWMF committee wished to organise and run its activities. First, the Fund's organisers, as well as many art critics at the time, believed that fine art had the power to capture the war in a way that neither text nor photographs could do. Current events transmitted through the eyes of artists, it was felt, were interpreted by way of a unique interaction between subject, recorder and audience. Fund officials wished to take advantage of their artists' distinctive skill and vision to capture and communicate the true essence of the war experience for all Canadians. Tied closely to this was a unifying goal – a feeling that the war art scheme should harmoniously draw together the styles and techniques of the various artists that took part – from traditionalist members of the British Royal Academy, to the modernists involved in radical Vorticist, Futurist and Cubist movements. A third concern was that the Canadian War Memorials Fund should serve an important historical function, as a record of Canada's important place in the war effort.

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[1] Lord Rothermere, *The Housing of the Canadian War Memorials* – brochure (London: by the author, 1919), 1.

Like all ambitious projects, however, not everything went smoothly in the creation of the CWMF nor in the realisation of the goals set out for it; the Fund proved to be a tangle of competing and often contradictory aims, purposes, functions and interpretations, a much more complex war art project than that suggested by Rothermere's statement above. In particular, Lord Beaverbrook's involvement with Canadian and British propaganda efforts throughout the war and the proximity of the Canadian War Memorials Fund to other government information-control projects led to the development of facets of the Fund's persona that were unmistakably propagandist in nature. The sentiments of Beaverbrook and his colleagues, as well as the majority of the Fund's viewing audience, about the way the war should be represented, particularly in Canada, also created in the CWMF intense memorialising undertones which sought to present to Canadians a positive, sanitised impression of life at war. The greatest measurements of this were the proposed grand gallery in Ottawa and the exhibitions themselves, which toured numerous cities until the mid-1930s.

While the CWMF was touted as a scheme that would function as a reliable document of the war, it also took on the role – sometimes stated and sometimes veiled

– of helping to venerate it. While Fund organisers widely publicised the project's generous incorporation of a wide range of artists to paint the Western Front, strict regulations were often imposed over the means by which artists carried out these commissions. And while the Fund was at times recognised as carrying out a memorialising role in Canada, as indicated in Lord Rothermere's statement above, the means by which it would have done this – its exhibitions and its planned permanent gallery – were not kept in the public domain where they could have their greatest impact. The gallery was planned but never completed, and the exhibitions – while they toured for a time between the wars – were eventually terminated, the works of art stored away from public view.

The various conflicts that were such a central part of the CWMF's existence are best examined during the period of the Fund's exhibition cycle, from 1918 until the mid-1930s. Particularly important to consider are the various advertising sources used to publicise the displays, since these materials give a very good sense of the type of public manifestation the Fund's organising committee was attempting to create, and the controlled ways in which Beaverbrook and his colleagues used and manipulated advertising and media reports to get across to art critics and the public their particular view of the war.

Also key is an analysis of the subsequent reaction of participating artists and officials, as well as art critics and the general public in Canada, Britain and the United States, since this serves to highlight which attempts at moulding the Canadian War Memorials Fund were successful and why. In addition, it will be important to examine some of Beaverbrook's other wartime activities in order to paint a broader picture of the impact of his beliefs about memorialising and propagandising the First World War on the decisions he made as chief coordinator of the Canadian War Memorials Fund.

Shaping the Vocabulary of War

Before the first Canadian War Memorials Fund exhibition had even opened, National Gallery of Canada director Eric Brown wrote in *The Christian Science Monitor* in 1918 that one "does not need much imagination to describe it as probably the greatest collection of commissioned art that has ever been seen at one time in history."[2] Paul Konody's introduction to the show's catalogue, also written long before the doors of Burlington House were opened to the public, is also markedly positive about the project and the expected public and critical reception of it:

> The Canadian War Memorials, the first portion of which now fills the Royal Academy Galleries at Burlington House constitutes unquestionably the most complete artistic record of any country's share in the great war, and the most significant manifestation of artistic activity during this period.[3]

These statements underscore the fact that the art communities in both Britain and Canada, as well as Fund officials, predicted the success of the CWMF collection early on. They did so on the basis of shared assumptions about the groundbreaking status of a project that used fine art to depict life at war. Konody made clear on numerous occasions that he believed the CWMF project to be nothing short of a turning point in the history of art. "The devoting of a whole issue of *Colour* to one subject is a departure from the usual policy followed by this Magazine, for which an explanation may be reasonably expected." That explanation, he wrote, was the landmark foundation of the Fund, whose "actual and promised achievement, not only constitute an event of supreme importance…to Art, but may be boldly claimed to inaugurate a new era of powerfully stimulating art patronage."[4]

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[2] Eric Brown, "Canadian War Art to Order," *The Christian Science Monitor* 10, no. 291 (November 4, 1918): 4(?).

[3] Canadian War Records Office, *Canadian War Memorials Exhibition: Burlington House, Piccadilly – January & February1919* – exhibition catalogue (London: by the author, 1919), 1.

While photography had proven useful to a degree in capturing the Great War for posterity, instances of faked and touched-up photographs prompted many to conclude that art alone had the ability to show the war in a way that no other medium could. "What we all want revealed," wrote one columnist, "is the humanity, the simple and astounding truth. For of that living actuality the camera can give us little at all."[5] Lord Beaverbrook, as director of the Canadian War Records Office which produced written reports, films and photographs of war-time activities, had conceived of the CWMF in 1916 as an alternative scheme that would complement his photography project, and yet would capture and preserve the war as he came to believe only artists could. As with other forms of visual communication, Beaverbrook was acutely aware of the appeal and potential power exerted by the artist:

> Under modern conditions nations are fighting nations and are sacrificing bone and sinew to an extent never known before – and realisation alone can justify the sacrifice. We must *see* our men climbing out of the trenches to the assault before we can realise the patience, the exhaustion, and

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[4] Paul Konody, "The Canadian War Memorials," *Colour Magazine* 9, no. 2 (September 1918): 25.

[5] C. H. Collins Baker quoted in Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War: Canada, Art, and the Great War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 22.

> the courage which are the assets and the trials of the modern fighting man [italics in original].[6]

By 'seeing' Beaverbrook meant that Canadians at home required access to images of the war that suitably conveyed the poignancy of the experience of Canada's soldiers. He, Konody, and countless art critics firmly believed that the hand and eye of the artist could transform a simple, tired image of a battle, a field hospital or a battalion of marching soldiers, into a stirring personal account. As art critic Robert Holliday proclaimed in 1918:

> Only the artist can show the visible scene in the light of the spirit in which it is lived. Unlike the camera, his is the power to seize upon those things before him the interest of which is universal and eternal, and to let drop away those things which are ephemeral and accidental. He does not merely draw ruined churches and houses, great guns being aimed, guards and lorries, doctors and wounded men. His is the mission of making visible by his art to those remote from the scene and to distant ages the staunchness and patience, the faithful absorption in the next duty, the extraordinary humour, the standards of comradeship and good nature – all the strains of character and emotion that go to make up the temper of a great army in the field. He does not merely draw armed figures in the act of proceeding across a plain; he paints moments of transfiguration, when all the glow of courage that has been banked down and husbanded through months of waiting and guarding, bursts, at a word of command, into flame.[7]

Writings such as this, by numerous critics, as well as by Paul Konody, Lord Beaverbrook, and their fellow Canadian War Memorials Fund organisers, reflect the importance attributed by many to the artist's unique abilities to portray scenes of war. It is interesting with their words in mind, therefore, to examine this belief in the need to support artist's talents with the conflicting reaction amongst Fund officials about the best way to deal with the often disquieting vision of the avant-garde artists they commissioned.

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[6] Lord Beaverbrook, *Canadian War Records Office Reports – 1916-1919, Including a Report of the Executive Committee of the Canadian War Memorials Fund* (London: publisher unknown, 1919), 7.

[7] Robert Cortes Holliday, "Posing the War for the Painter," *Bookman* 47 (July 1918): 515.

While Fund organisers marketed their project as a unifier of diverse artistic voices, the handling of artists commissioned to produce works was not nearly so generous. The committee went to pains to promote the Fund as a seamless unification of the old and the new in art – a merging of the time-honoured conventional landscapes and battle-scenes with modern and challenging forms of artistic expression. It made use of the forum of public newspapers and magazines, as well as catalogues and pamphlets sold and distributed at CWMF exhibitions, to disseminate a vision of the Fund as a groundbreaking venture that hired artists of every school. This stance was often contradicted, however, by the committee's reluctance to hire radical modernists and its continued unwillingness to promote visions of the war that proved troubling to spectators and critics.

Advertising of the Canadian War Memorials began in 1918, a year before the first showing of its work was to be held. Writing in September in a special issue of *Colour Magazine* devoted to the Canadian war art program, Paul Konody assured the British public that the CWMF project and its displays would provide an opportunity to witness a new phase in art production and patronage.[8] He stressed that in this new age, one could easily find artists as diverse as: "academic painters, naturalists, plein-airists, impressionists, neo-realists, neo-impressionists, expressionists, cubists, vorticists, futurists, representative of every step leading from strictly representational to abstract art."[9]

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[8] Paul Konody, "The Canadian War Memorials," 25.

These styles, he promised, would be incorporated into the Fund's scheme, in a manner careful to present a picture of diversity, "but diversity kept under control."[10] By this Konody meant simply that no one style would take precedence and that all works would be completed in the same general scale in order to give a sense of uniformity to the exhibitions. In his articles and catalogues, Konody consistently played up what he called the 'catholicity of taste' that was shown by members of the committee in their selection process, in which great care was taken "in every case to secure the best representation of every school of artistic thought and to find for each subject the artist most likely to do justice to it." He continued proudly that "the Committee allowed the artist the utmost liberty to deal with his broadly indicated subject in any manner he thought fit, so that the work should not suffer from irksome interference or restrictions of any kind."[11]

As it turned out, however, the CWMF committee exercised far more control in the activities of its artists than is implied in Konody's words. To compound the fact that few of the painters, printmakers and sculptors taken into service by the executive committee were in fact radical modernists, the committee nonetheless worked to suppress the production of art that they deemed unacceptable; organisers exercised strict control over which artists were selected and what they painted. As a result a hierarchy was created at the Fund, and was manifest in both the method Fund organisers used to direct the production of work, and in the actual display of works at CWMF exhibitions. This structure placed safer, less controversial work ahead of the modernist paintings, which were often displayed in groupings away from the other works, under the title 'decorative panels.' These works were shown by implication to be less worthy of recognition than the traditional pieces in the collection.[12]

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[9] Canadian War Records Office, *Art and War: Canadian War Memorials*, with an article by P. G. Konody (London: Colour Magazine Ltd., 1919), 15.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Paul Konody, "The Canadian War Memorials," 26.

The committee's treatment of modern art can be traced to the fact that the project's members shared a general public distaste for modernism – a wariness that became evident from the very first showing of the CWMF collection. Despite art columnist Barker Fairley's assertions to the public that "[t]here are…pictures enough in the collection to attract the world at large,"[13] many spectators were not sure they approved of some of the works displayed and quickly lent their praise only to certain pieces, namely those that were produced in a traditional vein. The description of the first exhibition at London's Burlington House in 1919 in the *Canadian Annual Review* focuses, for instance, on these traditional works, such as Richard Jack's *The Taking of Vimy Ridge* and *The Second Battle of Ypres* (Figure 5), Norman Wilkinson's *Canada's Answer* (Figure 9), Louis Wierter's *The Battle for Courcelette*, and portraits by William Orpen (Figure 6). One critic dismissed the few Cubist and Vorticist works appearing in the display as "modernistic to the point of nightmares…[o]f little value from the standpoint of either art or war."[14]

When the exhibition came to Canada, a *Star Weekly* reporter was among many who predicted that the modernist works were "going to puzzle sorely several hundred thousand Canadians in the next two weeks."[15] Hector Charlesworth, perhaps the most uncompromising art critic in Canada at the time, was not at all surprised that "the strange surge of emotion that assailed many of us on encountering the first series a year ago should be no less insistent this year."[16] Though the selection of modernist works in the collection was small, critical writing about the shows that appeared in newspapers and magazines consistently fixated upon these pieces, condemning their aesthetic features and refusing to address their common themes of violence, waste and despair.

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[12] Jonathan Vance, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997), 106.

[13] Barker Fairley, "Canadian War Pictures," *The Canadian Magazine* 54, no. 1 (November 1919): 3.

[14] W. B. Kerr quoted in Jonathan Vance, *Death So Noble*, 107.

Obviously, there were characteristics of the avant-garde images that disturbed viewers. Central was the widely-held view that these new art forms were aesthetically unappealing and spelled the end of beauty in art. Critic Augustus Bridle commented that Futurist work in particular looked to him like "troglodyte specimens of the un-utterably ugly," when a painting of a human face could look "about equivalent to a chunk of stove-pipe struck by falling bricks."[17] These types of images, he argued, would result in nothing less than "the destruction of art, some of which took a lifetime to produce and the best of a thousand years to bring to a ripe state of historic interest."[18]

More importantly, modernist works were intimidating to turn of the century audiences because the way they presented current events was similar to the use of metaphor in literature – these images forced viewers to think by making connections between concepts. Paintings depicting shelled trees and the crater-marked wasteland of the front, for instance, spoke to viewers about destruction, not only of natural places, but of towns and villages, and of human lives.[19] The modernist works produced by the few CWMF artists who chose to express their experiences using Cubist, Futurist and Vorticist vocabularies were unacceptable to many spectators because in them was perceived something of the haphazard, the ugly, the inexplicable. What was wanted, rather, were images of war that transformed modern warfare – characterised by disorder, confusion, and chaos – into a rational and comprehensible activity.[20] By dismissing these works as visually unappealing, or as obscure and confusing, many viewers found they could simply ignore them and the messages they carried, to focus instead on the portraits, the conventional battle scenes, and the peaceful, figureless landscapes.[21]

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[15] August 28, 1919 *Star Weekly* reporter quoted in Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War*, 95.

[16] Hector Charlesworth quoted in Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War*, 95.

[17] Augustus Bridle, "The Arts and the War," *Maclean's* 29, no. 13 (February, 1916): 19.

[18] Ibid., 20.

Many critics compounded public anxiety over avant-garde art by associating all modernist expression with a rise in German aggression and war-mongering. Augustus Bridle, for instance, recalled the manifestos of the Italian Futurists and German Expressionists engaged before the outbreak of the First World War in an artistic and literary "battle against the soullessness, the deadness, laziness and meanness of the philistine world" when he wrote that the same mentality that went into these movements was leading the current charge to war.[22] "There is reason to believe," he wrote, "that the state of mind expressed in a great part of modern Europe had a great deal to do with the brain condition that is waging the war."[23]

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[19] Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), 268.

[20] Jonathan Vance, *Death So Noble*, 107.

[21] Ibid., 106-7.

[22] Ernst Blass quoted in Milton A. Cohen, "Fatal Symbiosis: Modernism and the First World War" in *The Literature of the Great War Reconsidered: Beyond Modern Memory* (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2001), 159-60.

To be fair, it must be noted that, of the organising committee members, Paul Konody was the most charitable toward the avant-garde images, attempting to arouse positive interest in the media. Konody made numerous efforts throughout the Fund's exhibition cycle to counteract the negative feedback from the more controversial pieces in the travelling display. However, after a time, many critics began to feel that Konody's endeavors at convincing the public of the validity of modern art were not only ineffective, but ridiculous. "The proper way to appreciate a picture may be to stand on your head," one columnist teased, quoting Konody as declaring that "the real test of a good painting is to look at it upside down. Its aesthetic appeal should not suffer by this reversion. The recognition of the representational element is only a minor attraction."[24]

Yet despite his willingness to show a certain amount of support for the avant-garde works, no modernist pieces were ever intended to assume a fundamental place in the CWMF exhibitions, nor at the grand gallery to house it in Ottawa. Even Konody felt strongly that the exhibitions should be shaped around work like John Byam Liston Shaw's romantic and sentimental *The Flag* (Figure 15), or the religious and symbolic *Sacrifice* by Charles Sims (Figure 16) – rather than modernist works that he understood from early on would be incomprehensible to the majority of viewers.[25] In plans for the memorial building, Konody described how "[t]he apotheosis by Charles Sims will be declaimed from the halls around the Central Dome," testifying to the extent to which the more conventional works were given substance and significance through the prominence with which they were to be displayed for posterity.[26]

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[23] Augustus Bridle, "The Arts and the War," 19.

[24] Paul Konody quoted in "The Futurist Paintings at Exhibition Defended," *The Globe* (September 2, 1920): 9.

[25] Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War*, 79-80.

The dismissive attitude toward modernism within the Canadian War Memorials Fund was a prevalent one and it succeeded in having a marked effect on a number of artists who participated in the project. Modernists who submitted work that the committee felt was inappropriate were expected to alter or repaint scenes, and the committee did not hesitate to intervene in its artists' commissions on several occasions when tensions arose around interpretations of war deemed too frightening and perplexing for public display.

Eric Kennington unwittingly antagonised the committee when he submitted his large canvas of the 16th Canadian Scottish regiment marching to Amiens. The painting was originally entitled *The Victims* and depicts a line of kilted soldiers marching beneath shattered trees, some men shown with disturbingly sightless eyes, others with skeletal limbs and skull-like faces (Figure 17). The Fund's committee attempted to lighten the mood of the work for the public by describing Kennington's soldiers in the exhibition catalogue as "war-hardened storm troops."[27] When a request came from a Colonel in the 16th division, the Fund willingly changed the painting's name to *The Victors* and then, to *The Conquerors*. Anything less victorious would not, presumably, have satisfied the general public, the government, or the CWMF who displayed Kennington's picture in an exhibition advertised as one that would demonstrate to Canadians the gallantry and heroism of their sons, brothers and fathers overseas.

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[26] Canadian War Records Office, *Art and War*, 16. Also note the prominence given to John Byam Shaw's *The Flag* in the September 1919 Toronto CNE exhibition of the CWMF (Figure 13).

[27] Captain Percy Godenrath, *Lest We Forget: The Story of the Canadian War Memorials Collection of Art – the Gift of the Army to the Nation* – exhibition catalogue, with a foreword by Lt.-Col. R. F. Parkinson (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1934), 2.

Perhaps the best-documented example of the intervention of CWMF committee members in the painting tasks of their artists was the case of David Bomberg. After submitting his *Sappers at Works* to the committee in 1919, he received a hostile reception from all, including Konody, who told Bomberg "[y]ou submit to me the most wonderful drawings – yours is the last panel to be fixed before Government House can be opened, and you bring me this futurist abortion. What am I to say to my Committee?"[28] The demoralised young painter was eventually convinced to repaint the work, his wife having promised Konody that no cubism would appear in the revised version.[29] (Figure 14).

There were some viewers and critics who applauded the few artists who tried to bring a modernist vocabulary to the war. Critic Barker Fairley in *Canadian Forum* praised the moderns for driving home "the fact that this great war was not a glory-getting, come-on-home-boys sort of struggle, but a very filthy mess, a tangle of garbage-like residue, tortured earth, and pitiful heroic victims," and he lamented that works by those such as William Roberts and Paul Nash, though expressing "the emotional reaction of war on their own natures…[were far too] esoteric" and would "probably remain so. [They] will speak to a few only."[30] When it heard of the renaming of Eric Kennington's painting, The *Christian Science Monitor* voiced its dissatisfaction with what it called the shameless manipulation of the painter's intentions by Fund officials. "This is a pity for the picture is a statement by the artist," the magazine commented, adding that "it is very easy to see why he called it *The Victims*."[31] But the committee had made their decision and their position was echoed by many, including a future governor general of Canada, Lord Tweedsmuir, when he remarked that he had a poor opinion of the British artist's work. "I am very doubtful about Eric Kennington, his whole style of work is utterly remote from and undescriptive of the western front."[32]

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[28] Paul Konody quoted in Richard Cork, *A Bitter Truth: Avant-Garde Art and the Great War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 229-30.

[29] Richard Cork, *A Bitter Truth*, 229-30.

[30] Barker Fairley, "Canadian War Pictures," 8-9.

It is interesting to note that the majority of spectators who voiced a critical view of the Fund's handling of its artists and its preference for conventional romantic images of war, were themselves artists. Painter A. Y. Jackson believed Richard Jack's paintings showed the "futility of fine craftsmanship used without passion or dramatic conception."[33] Artist Arthur Lismer dismissed CWMF colleague Norman Wilkinson's canvas of the First Contingent sailing from Canada as "a tame transcript of a steamship company on review," described James Kerr-Lawson's *The Cloth Hall, Ypres*, as "a papery photographic rendering, absolutely without a single passage of dramatic value," and rejected the publicly acclaimed *The Flag* by Byam Shaw as "a decorative illustration in drab tones, uninspired, totally lacking in warmth of feeling."[34] His strong words give insight into the thoughts and perspectives of a number of artists who saw the Fund's use of a traditional vocabulary in the artistic depiction of the war as a blatant effort to mask the gut-wrenching realities of life at the Front:

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[31] *Christian Science Monitor* quoted in Richard Cork, *A Bitter Truth*, 6.

[32] Lord Tweedsmuir quoted in Laura Brandon and Dean Oliver, *Canvas of War: Painting the Canadian Experience, 1914-1945*, with a foreword by Jack Granatstein (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2000), 27.

[33] Jonathan Vance, *Death So Noble*, 103.

[34] Arthur Lismer, "The Canadian War Memorials," *Rebel* 4, no. 1 (October 1919): 41.

> The academic painter of conservative ideas – who is largely represented in this collection – has not risen beyond this method and still presents us with the same type of outlook – without the flare of a Meissonier or the conscientiousness of a Détaille. His argus-eyed mediocrity gives us 'posthumous' pictures of battlefields, frozen in action, with all the traditional impedimenta strewn around. Bully-beef tins and yellow cigarette packets take the place of the old time broken sabers and cannon balls, but the spirit is still the same – detail without fervour – incident without intensity – mildly interesting the onlooker in the vast size of his effort and leaving us with the idea that he has made a very polite performance, was never disturbed, and worked according to the pattern."[35]

Both the strong reaction of CWMF committee members to works such as those by Bomberg and Kennington, and the frequent inability to come to terms with the grimmer aspects of the war experience, drove many of the Fund's commissioned artists to alter their own style in order to avoid confrontation. These painters practiced a sort of self-censorship, even adopting more traditional painting styles, or simply choosing not to paint certain scenes or topics at all. Other artists who had not experimented with modernism before the war were even less likely to venture into new techniques under the tight control of Fund officials.[36]

The landscape painter William Beatty was one artist who continued to use his pre-war traditionalist vocabulary to depict what he saw while working for the CWMF. He could find no way to express his experience at the Front and therefore retained his landscape style unchanged; the war was purely incidental in his canvases, and often only the title revealed that his subject was the scene of a battle[37] (Figure 18). As art critic Barker Fairley remarked, these types of images were simply "peace-pictures with war motives introduced."[38] It was not that Beatty and other artists like him were immune to what they saw in France and Belgium. Ravaged countrysides strewn with metal and the bodies of men and horses, the landscape of the front-line did not offer many familiar sites. Even an artist as apt to make use of modernist expressions as Paul Nash observed of the Somme in 1917 that it resembled

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[35] Ibid., 40.

[36] Richard Cork, *A Bitter Truth*, 230. As Cork writes, one modernist painter who managed to make an interesting adaptation to his new career as a CWMF artist while still maintaining his pre-war modernist style was the Vorticist Edward Wadsworth. Since his earlier artistic practices and sympathies were known to the committee, he was, like William Roberts, Percy Wyndham Lewis and numerous others, cautioned about the importance of avoiding certain techniques and approaches. He was able, however, to choose the subject of 'dazzle-ships' in dry dock – military ships painted with stunning geometric patterns to help camouflage them at sea and in battle – a technique he himself invented (Figure 19).

> a terrific creation of some malign fiend working a crooked will on the innocent countryside. The machine had superceded God's handiwork; his landscape was being reshaped by man's instruments. Ypres and Vimy Ridge were deliberately invented scenes.[39]

A good many of the Fund's artists coped with this strange and forbidding landscape by trying to pick out the few picturesque qualities they saw, and some found certain aspects quite stunning: "The beauty of places like Ypres is beyond words,"[40] wrote William Rothenstein, who interpreted the blasted trees around Bourlon through the use of elegant shapes and cheerful tones. Similarly, painter Harold Gilman, sent to Halifax in 1918 where the explosion of the French munitions ship *Mont Blanc* had occurred, completely ignored the destruction in his paintings. Rather than using the devastated harbour as a subject, where hundreds of sailors and civilians had been killed, however, Gilman focused his attention on a derrick and dredger, his panorama giving not a hint of wartime concerns.[41] The propensity of many CWMF artists to see beauty in the midst of death and destruction reflects to some extent the accepted notions of the day about what made a good painting. These notions were strongly held by Fund committee members, and artists were often reminded that their duty lay in seeking out the best aspects of Canada's experience at the Front, not in frightening viewers.

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[37] Jonathan Vance, *Death So Noble*, 102-3.

[38] Barker Fairley, "Canadian War Pictures, " 8.

[39] Paul Nash quoted in Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War*, 58-9.

[40] William Rothenstein quoted in Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War*, 60.

[41] Richard Cork, *A Bitter Truth:* 207-8.

Countless art critics and theorists had dedicated books and articles around the turn of the century to advocating for the preservation of what were felt to be the fundamentals of fine art. Irish novelist, dramatist and art critic George Moore, whose efforts to introduce the Impressionists to an English audience were well known, had been vocal in his *Modern Painting*, published only two decades before the CWMF was established, that artists had an obligation to use the "series of conventions" art provided to express their "special sense of beauty:"[42]

> The mission of art is not truth, but beauty; and I know of no great work – I will go even further, I know no even tolerable work – in literature or in painting in which the element of beauty does not inform the intention. Art is surely but a series of conventions which enable us to express our special sense of beauty – for beauty is everywhere, and abounds in subtle manifestations…Again, an alteration in the light and shade will create beautiful pictures among the meanest brick buildings…A picturesque shadow will redeem the squalor of the meanest garret…with the poetising aid of light and shade the meanest and most commonplace incidents of every-day life could be made the subjects of pictures.[43]

Moore's views on art were adhered to not only by Fund organisers and many of its artists, but by contemporary art critics and their readers as well. A columnist in the *American Magazine of Art* wrote confidently in 1919 that "[t]here are two reasons why the conservation of art at its source – in the heart of the artist – should be an important part of our war preparations. In the first place we need the pleasure which the beauty of art can bring to refresh us when we are tired and to cheer us when we are dispirited and discouraged."[44]

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[42] George Moore, *Modern Painting* (London: Walter Scott Ltd., 1898), 119.
[43] Ibid., 119-20.

Fund officials were generally relieved by their artists' reluctance to make use of modernism and they further emphasised their distrust of everything avant-garde by attempting to obscure the infrequent appearance of it in their publications. In contrast to claims that the Fund was receptive to a multitude of styles and expressions, the committee certainly did not translate this message into the texts of its catalogues, which dwelt upon the inclusions in the collection that were conventional and safe. By and large, the images in the catalogues that are accompanied by extensive written passages are those that are either traditional battle paintings or portraits of officers and officials. Image #28 in the London 1919 catalogue, for instance, describes *The Taking of Vimy Ridge* by Richard Jack with the following (an excerpt from the much longer text):

> On their part the Canadians worked incessantly for months. When the day arrived every man in the corps was perfectly trained for the assault. Electrically-lighted tunnels led to the assembly positions, every possible contingency had been foreseen, every phase had been practiced again and again, and the artillery concentration was on an absolutely unprecedented scale.
>
> At 5:30 a.m. the barrage opened with a terrific crash and in the semi-darkness the whole ridge seemed to burst into flame. The long Canadian line moved forward steadily and relentlessly. Objective after objective was taken with clocklike precision. Before noon the Germans in Thelus were being hunted in the cellars like rats; shortly after noon the Canadians were all along the crest of the ridge, looking down on the plains of Douai beyond. Canadian cavalry passed through the rode [*sic*] unchecked as far as Willerval.
>
> It was a splendid triumph, perfectly planned and brilliantly executed. In the course of a few hours one of the most formidable German bastions in the West had fallen to Canadian generalship and courage.[45]

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[44] Duncan Phillips, "Art and the War," *American Magazine of Art* IX, no. 8 (June 1918): 303.

Because the traditional works such as Jack's were easily accepted and understood by the public, there was no need to comment on their style or on artistic techniques used by the individual artist. It was the event that was felt to be of key interest to the public, and so the event was treated with utmost importance. Without the need to interpret the artist's mode of expression, the committee was free instead to focus its attention upon the activity being depicted, and this was done in the most detailed and heroic of terms, positioning these works of art as faithful accounts of the experiences of soldiers and artist-correspondents in Belgium and France.

The description that accompanies William Roberts' *The First German Gas Attack at Ypres*, on the other hand, is very different (Figure 7). Rather than describe the incident depicted in the painting, as above, the text focuses almost entirely on attempting to interpret the work's modernist style, and falls back on some deep-rooted stereotypes and assumptions:

> The artist's conception of the first gas attack while frankly decorative is an appeal to the emotions and not a literal rendering of the horrible surprise sprung upon the Allies, April 22nd, 1915. Line, form and rhythm are allowed to speak their own language. The subject is the moment when the picturesquely uniformed Turcos and Zouaves, overwhelmed by the gas surprise, flooded back through the Canadian artillery positions. The physical suffering of the gas victims is suggested by their twisted and contorted attitudes, in contradistinction to those of the gunners, which are expressive of energy, strength and determination, as they stick grimly to the task of holding back the advancing German infantry, barely a quarter of a mile away.[46]

In direct contrast to the description of Richard Jack's painting, that of Roberts' work is dedicated to making the image more comprehensible to the average viewer

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[45] Canadian War Records Office, *Canadian War Memorials Exhibition: Burlington House, Piccadilly – January & February1919*, 3-4.

[46] Captain Percy Godenrath, *Lest We Forget*, 16.

confronting it in a CWMF exhibition space. Roberts used dazzling colour and surging shapes to suggest the confusion, momentum and sense of strangulation experienced by the Canadians at the centre of the German attack. The text describing his painting latches onto the formal qualities of his work, giving very little detail of the gas attack itself, aside from the date. Those particulars that are given, such as the ornamental quality of the French colonial soldiers' uniforms, are used to help decipher what CWMF organisers believed to be an image too confusing for the general public to interpret unaided.

The committee's attempts to translate the more challenging images into simpler terms was also seen in the case of Vorticist painter Percy Wyndham Lewis' *Canadian Gunpit*, Image #66 in the 1919 London catalogue (Figure 20). Lewis was advised at the time of his hiring that he should abandon his "uncompromising attitude, with its leaning towards severely geometric, spheric [*sic*] forms,"[47] but by the time he submitted his painting for review, the committee obviously felt that he had not done enough to suppress his modernist leanings. The catalogue attempts to decipher his painting, giving a further sting to Lewis himself with the implication in the last sentence that he was not very adept at using a modernist vocabulary he himself had helped to initiate as co-founder of the Vorticist group in London before the war:

> The moment chosen is that of laying the gun. The terraced group of figures along the shells are not intended to be anything but rugged in the matter of physiognomy. The painting is furthermore a *decoration*, essentially, and its treatment subordinates to the great lines of balance and arrangement –

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[47] Paul Konody, "The Canadian War Memorials," 32.

> the impressionistic truth of modern pictorial art. It is an experiment of the painter's in a kind of painting not his own [italics in original].[48]

Though Beaverbrook and his associates prided themselves on having created a project dedicated to producing a unique understanding of the activities of Canadians in the First World War by way of its all-embracing mandate, the overwhelming desire by CWMF organisers to dwell upon the traditional images in the collection reflects a different reality; that the main accomplishment of the Fund was not the presentation of a challenging view of the war to spectators. The modernist works were simply too difficult for the majority of visitors at CWMF exhibitions to navigate. The Fund's committee undoubtedly recognised this and were content to restrict the production of art that might have harmed their objective of producing a war art project that was meant to serve Canadians for generations to come. Organisers touted the traditional works as the true representations of life at war, and yet, while many of the more conventional paintings in the CWMF collection depict battles and the destruction of various French and Belgian towns and landmarks, it is the modernist works that successfully link this destruction to themes of human suffering and death.

Recording the 'Horrors of War'

In addition to promoting the Canadian War Memorials Fund's status as a groundbreaking aesthetic venture that captured the emotive essence of the war experience, and advertising it as a unifier of diverse and at times controversial art forms, the Fund was also marketed as a collection of reliable documents of Canadian activity in the First World War. Alongside efforts to limit the production of modernist pieces, the traditional works were touted as accurate and realistic records of war, different than conventional battle paintings from previous wars because Fund artists had the advantage of first-hand experience at the Front. "One of the most fascinating things about the return of first rate art to the subject of war is that it returns shorn of the academic conventions of pomp and panoply characteristic of the old, set battle pieces and stage-set scenes of surrenders," wrote *Bookman* reviewer Robert Holliday after viewing a CWMF show.[49]

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[48] Canadian War Records Office, *Canadian War Memorials Exhibition: Burlington House, Piccadilly – January & February1919*, 7.

Both Fund organisers and a majority of critics claimed that the traditional pieces in the collection marked the "evolution away from the pictorial picture…and literary theme show pageants." With their "new fidelity to visible facts," it was declared, these paintings and prints displayed the "actual circumstances of the war."[50] The scheme's artists were permitted to roam where they pleased and record what they saw without intervention, it was publicised. And because the majority of artists commissioned had been soldiers, claimed Lord Beaverbrook, commissions would undoubtedly bear no resemblance to tired battle paintings of old:

> If a pictorial record of this greatest of all wars is to be of permanent value, it must be created from actual impressions whilst they are fresh on the mind, whilst emotions and passions and enthusiasms are at their highest. A "posthumous" war picture is as valueless as a posthumous portrait.[51]

This inclination to look upon the works in the Fund's collection – the majority of which were done in a traditional vein – as if they marked a radical departure from conventional battle painting was extremely common in both advertisement of and public reaction to the Canadian War Memorials Fund. A reviewer in *Canadian Forum* praised the CWMF for having "engaged the services of young war-experienced…artists who had seen service at first hand and had little use for glory. These latter were keener observers, and their realism was not merely an observation of outward appearance; it was a compound of individual emotions, of deep searching, a willingness to throw over the tradition of the commonly accepted idea of warfare." "Flashing sabers and accoutrements," he continues, "broken gun-carriages and riderless horses and clouds of black smoke, the old well-favoured symbols of war, are replaced by churned up earth, ruined trees, and shattered villages," though this was certainly not the case in the majority of the Fund's commissions. The reviewer concludes by asserting that the CWMF's collection provides the viewer with a break from the "weary tradition of the miles of tiresome battle pictures one sees in France of the Napoleonic Wars."[52]

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[49] Robert Holliday, "Posing the War for the Painter," 515.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Lord Beaverbrook quoted in Paul Konody, "The Canadian War Memorials," 27.

These critical reactions worked to reaffirm statements from the CWMF which assured the viewing public that their artists had seen active duty and could, therefore, produce more accurate renderings of the 'horrors of war.' "Indeed, most of the artists represented have seen actual service, and have therefore reproduced actual experiences on their canvases," claimed columnist A. E. Gallatin, despite the fact that a very small minority of artists had witnessed combat of any kind.[53] The desire by the Fund and art critics of the time to play up the active service of war artists was directly linked to the public's longing to believe that the images of war they saw in the CWMF's exhibitions were documentary images – that they were authentic depictions of activities at the Front. They equated the nearness of the artists' experiences with the accuracy of their records and were comforted in their belief that viewing these works gave them the opportunity, in some small way, of taking part in the war effort themselves – they felt they were gaining an understanding of what had been for the majority of Canadians a very strange and distant event.

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[52] "Canada's War Pictures," *Canadian Forum* 7, no.74 (November 1926): 38.
[53] A. E. Gallatin, "Canadian War Memorial Show," *American Art News* 17 (June 14, 1919): 1.

Canadians at home, unlike the British and the French, were far removed geographically from the sounds and sights of battle during the First World War. A tightly run propaganda scheme initiated by Britain and subsequently assigned to her colonies, further ensured that the majority of Canadians were largely unaware of front-line conditions. This made them even more prone to accept idealised renderings of the war and to reject depictions that challenged their imagined view of it. When Beaverbrook and Konody announced that Fund images were produced by soldier-artists (no matter how much this statement stretched the truth), they understood fully the kind of credibility this statement would lend to their project, of which I will discuss more later.

Beaverbrook and his committee's promotion of the Fund as a collection of faithful war documents went beyond merely misleading the public about the qualifications and experiences of their artists. While they publicised traditional battle paintings in the collection as authentic records, they worked against their own stated goals of creating a documentary venture by purposefully omitting depictions of certain aspects of life at war; images that would have undoubtedly shocked the Canadian public, but might have lent their project more credibility as a producer of valid historical documents.

CWMF artists were instructed to steer clear of depicting the dead and were even counseled that confrontations with the committee could be avoided by sidestepping the depiction of battles or the human subject completely, with the exception of figures engaged in utilitarian activities such as factory work and medical staff at nursing stations. As a result, artists rarely dealt with the experience of combat itself and with few exceptions – among them Harold Mowatt's *Trench Fight* and Jack's *The Second Battle of Ypres* – Canadian soldiers are not shown in hand-to-hand combat – and rarely do their corpses appear on canvas.[54]

Similarly, the machines of war, new and powerful weapons in what proved to be a very modern war, were all but ignored. There were, for example, no major paintings of tanks produced by the CWMF. With the exception of Futurist artists, guns were viewed by many as unaesthetic, especially by the more traditional painters, who felt that ugly metal machines provided little scope for the imagination.[55] Surprisingly, this attitude was shared by the Fund's committee members, who did not feel that a representative depiction of the war experience should necessarily include such images.

Only a handful of pieces in the Fund's collection depict tanks, and in at least two of them, the tanks are ruined, including Alfred Bastien's *Cavalry and Tanks Advance at Arras*. Even after the lessons learned from four years of war, the cavalry still represented force, energy, and freedom in the eyes of Fund organisers and many of its artists. The introduction of the tank onto the battlefield of Flanders and France had already changed modern war dramatically, but was still often a symbol of stasis.[56] In contrast to the six or so paintings of tanks in the CWMF collection, there are dozens of cavalry subjects, by Algernon Talmage, Gerald Spencer-Pryse, Alfred Bastien and, most notably, British landscape artist Sir Alfred Munnings (Figure 11).

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[54] Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War*, 71-2.
[55] Ibid., 69.

Although the historical accuracy of the CWMF collection is put into question by its refusal to depict numerous aspects of life at the Front, its status as a documentary project was constantly advertised by the committee and was underscored by the special attention paid to adding historical works to the group. Beaverbrook wrote proudly in his final Canadian War Memorials Fund report to the government in 1919 that "it has been found possible to reinforce the modern collection by four old masters which possess the greatest interest for the History of the Dominion."[57] This group included the famous painting the *Death of Wolfe* by Sir Benjamin West (Figure 21), which Beaverbrook argued, formed "a fitting pendant to the whole exhibition, giving us a means of comparing the new battle pictures with one of the greatest of the old, and bringing the Second Battle of Ypres into touch with the Battle of the Plains of Abraham."[58]

West's painting was acquired along with portraits of Alexander Mackenzie and Joseph Brant, as well as a contemporary work by Edgar Bundy showing Champlain landing at Québec in 1603, done as a companion piece to his canvas depicting the landing of First Division soldiers at St. Nazaire in 1915. All these works were seen by Beaverbrook as helping to realise the CWMF's aim of being recognised as a legitimate documentary venture, by linking Canada's past to the modern age. This was so important to the Fund that both Prime Minister Mackenzie King and Lord Beaverbrook reacted with alarm when Arthur Doughty, the official government archivist, attempted to transfer the historical paintings to the Dominion Archives. Such a move, they protested, would "be disastrous to [the] whole conception of the CWMF, for it would rob the collection of its historical context."[59]

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[56] Jonathan Vance, *Death So Noble*, 143.
[57] Lord Beaverbrook, *Canadian War Records Office Reports – 1916-1919*, 7.
[58] Ibid.

Clearly, Beaverbrook and his associates understood that the CWMF collection and exhibitions would benefit by making use of well-known and respected works in order to raise the profile of the WWI paintings; to make them prominent by association was to make them into instantaneous fragments of history. In addition, the inclusion of such works in an exhibition meant to highlight images of World War I was calculated to demonstrate to Canadians that they had a notable war history and moreover, a history of successful Anglo-Saxon victory in times of conflict. Beaverbrook viewed the war as an extremely important event, not only in world history, but in Canada's history in particular. In his mind, the Fund was a documentary project that used the powerful representations of dramatic events from the war to tie it to earlier works of art that represented equally important moments for Canada – nation-building moments: Confederation, the Battle on the Plains of Abraham, the exploration and settling of Canada's vast lands and waterways.

Compounding the exclusion from the collection of images that depicted disturbing aspects of war, and the inclusion of historical images solely to lend credibility, was the noticeable lack of good record-keeping practices exercised by organisers and artists. Despite Beaverbrook's assertions that his role was that of a responsible journalist and historian, he and his officials, as well as many of the artists themselves, made little attempt to authenticate their images. Without any sort of standardised system in place, specific names and locations of battles and other events were rarely recorded, in spite of the fact that most of the works were not completed until well after the cessation of fighting when the leakage of sensitive information would no longer have been a legitimate concern. Even the date and location in which specific subjects were noted is difficult to ascertain; many artists completed larger images in the studio months or even years after original sketches and photos were taken, and artists were not required to document their efforts.

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[59] William Lyon Mackenzie King quoted in Jonathan Vance, *Death So Noble*, 153.

A project that claimed to document war would also, presumably, contain numerous on-the-spot sketches, and while some did manage to find their way into the collection, they were for the most part ignored by the committee and the general public, both because they were not nearly as grand and exhilarating as the larger finished pieces, and because they were usually completed by amateur artists such as Arthur Nantel and William Topham.[60] Many sketches that were produced were never reviewed by the committee, since artists were rarely required to hand in such studies, a fact confirmed by Canadian painter A. Y. Jackson in later years.[61] This disregard – both willful and unintentional – of basic documentation practices further puts into question the Fund's role in producing valid historical records and suggests that it more often gave Canadians a positive and reassuring means by which to remember the war.

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[60] Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War*, 70.
[61] Laura Brandon and Dean Oliver, Canvas *of War*, 66.

A statement from Beaverbrook regarding his outlook on the production of war records – specifically related to his writing of history books – helps to shed some light on his attitude toward the CWMF and visual records more specifically:

> Obviously, such a book is not history in the strict sense. It is merely a contribution to history. Neither is it a day-to-day record of politics. It deals in the high lights which shine on big events of the epoch and on the vital decisions of the personalities who took part in them.[62]

Certainly this type of declaration makes clear that Beaverbrook, who saw himself as a combination of publicist, diplomat, manager, and historian, was more disposed to fall victim to the allure of entertaining than to wrestle with the difficulty of informing. As both his biographer A. J. P. Taylor and historian John Stubbs have remarked, Beaverbrook had several weakness as an historian, namely a lack of precision and a rather blinding interest in great men and great events – a "contemporary preoccupation of the political historian in examining politics at a time of crisis and from the perspective of the political leadership."[63]

These tendencies stand as examples of Beaverbrook's propensity, in his numerous ventures, to give color and drama to his narrative at the expense of historical accuracy.[64] While to a certain extent this can be traced to the fact that Beaverbrook had little training in record-making and record-keeping practices, the end result for the Canadian War Memorials Fund was a collection of 'documentary' images that did not consistently make note of locations of battles or other activities depicted, and a majority of works dated simply with the last year of the war, which was more often the date that the paintings were handed over to the Fund and not the date they were completed.[65] In addition, a number of images such as Harold Mowatt's *Trench Fight* and William Topham's *A Tank in Action* are of general themes, compiled from numerous sketches made in multiple locations, and do not depict specific incidents. All of these factors together suggest that the Fund only functioned under the guise of a producer of documentary records.[66]

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[62] Lord Beaverbrook, *Politicians and the War, 1914-1916* (London: Thornton Butterworth Ltd., 1928), 17.

[63] John O. Stubbs, "Beaverbrook as Historian: 'Politicians and the War, 1914-1916' Reconsidered," *Albion* 14, nos. 3 & 4 (Winter 1982): 239.

[64] Ibid., 248.

However, the record-making pursuit in which the CWMF was engaged must be understood in the context of what 'documentary' meant in Beaverbrook's own imagination – a project that blended in equal measure the acts of entertaining, recording, memorialising and propagandising – a project that would show what the war had been like, but only to the extent that it would also glorify the men who fought and testify to the superiority of the Allied cause. *Documentary* must also be understood in the context of what it meant more generally from 1914 to 1919 – the fledgling concept of documentary journalism combined with a lack of knowledge of or concern for authenticating images and sources. Finally, the notion of record-making must be interpreted within the confines of wartime with the resulting need for discretion, censorship, and, arguably, lies – concerns shared by Beaverbrook and countless of his contemporaries.

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[65] Canadian A.Y. Jackson was one artist who did make an effort to organise and document the scenes he depicted without specific instructions from the CWMF committee. He made sketches in small portable sketchbooks, and his drawings were often accompanied by hand-written comments describing the colours and details of a scene. Most importantly, on the majority of the drawings he produced, he carefully recorded the date and the location. Laura Brandon and Dean Oliver, *Canvas of War*, 66.

[66] Speaking to the general incompleteness of Beaverbrook's 'recording' scheme, there were a number of subjects that were poorly documented or simply not recorded at all. R. F. Wodehouse, who in 1968 compiled his *Check List of the War Collections*, noted that the subject of the "British flying services, in which so many Canadians served, suffered from neglect…I can find only two Canadian artists in the Collection who dealt with air subjects, and then only incidentally." R.F. Wodehouse, *Aviation Paintings – From the Collection of the Canadian War Museum* – exhibition catalogue, with a foreword by William E. Taylor, Jr. (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1972), 9. These artists were Gyrth Russell and James Wilson Morrice. Morrice was, in fact, assigned to paint infantry subjects. Although C. R. W. Nevinson, Frank Johnston and John Turnbull also completed 'air-battle' pieces, only Nevinson was actually assigned to this subject.

Historical Engineering

A deeper understanding of the motivation behind the manipulation by Canadian War Memorials Fund officials of artists and their work requires an examination of the atmosphere under which Lord Beaverbrook and the majority of other historians, journalists, media persons and government officials of all kinds were operating during the Great War. The larger framework of propagandising efforts implemented by the Canadian and British governments during and after the war – with their focus on suppressing disturbing details of the conditions in which the fighting men were living, and the strategic steering of the Canadian public toward an optimistic perception of the significance of the war for Canada – helps to situate Beaverbrook's organisational decisions in relation to the CWMF and its umbrella organisation, the CWRO.

Beaverbrook's connections to British and Canadian politics and the press were wide-ranging, and he drew from his diverse and powerful connections, as well as from his own beliefs about the importance of propaganda, to develop firm ideas about how he wished to run his various wartime projects, including the CWMF. His talent for representing the war in optimistic terms can be traced back to his experience running daily newspapers before the conflict, and perhaps more specifically to his role as Canada's official correspondent in the war's early years. Beaverbrook's reporting style in the early years of the war, and his later organisational decisions as director of the Canadian War Records Office and the Canadian War Memorials Fund can be seen as reflecting his two greatest war-time concerns. The first was his desire to strengthen a growing nationalist and imperialist pride, which was focused in Canada on the general belief that while the young country's confidence needed to be encouraged, its place in the Empire was still loyally alongside Britain. His second desire was to aid wartime recruiting efforts which, he rightly believed, depended very much upon the improvement of morale in Canada.

Beaverbrook understood that a war that relied on mass industrial output and exceptionally large armies would also depend very much upon morale at home. The preservation of home morale, in turn, would depend upon an effective propaganda machine that would give people hope and an objective to work towards.[67] The promotion of voluntary recruitment was, he argued, an important reason for publicising Canada's achievements in the war. By the spring of 1916, recruitment figures had begun to fall dramatically. With conscription apparently still a long way off (the June 1917 Military Service Act did not implement conscription until the following year), the Canadian situation, as Beaverbrook told Prime Minister Borden, was a special one that called for strong measures.[68]

Be it in literary or artistic form, Beaverbrook felt strongly that propaganda had to appeal to Canadians by giving them hope for the future. Though 1915 and 1916 were black years for the Allied cause, one would certainly not have known it from reading *Canada in Flanders*, or from the multitude of reports, articles and dispatches

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[67] Ken Ramstead, "The 'Eye-Witness': Lord Beaverbrook and 'Canada in Flanders'," *Register* 5, no. 2 (Autumn 1984): 300.

[68] Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War*, 20.

Beaverbrook produced in the war's early years. Information he received from the War Office, from unit diaries and other front-line documents, as well as his own observations from his few trips to the Front, revealed that the Allies' situation was far from good. Yet despite military blunders and the costly results of the use of primitive military intelligence and surveillance methods which resulted in huge Canadian casualties at St. Eloi, for instance, Beaverbrook wrote only of the "endurance, courage, and cheefulness" of Canadian soldiers.[69] His belief in the idea of eventual victory, or at least his desire to sway Canadians to believe it, was intense:

> And here for the present we take leave of the Canadians in Flanders. After incredible hardships patiently supported after desperate battles stubbornly contested, their work is still incomplete. But they will complete it, for it is the work of Civilisation and of Liberty.[70]

In his role as correspondent, Beaverbrook fell in very easily with the previously-established mandate that had been set out for and by journalists covering the war. Occasionally reporters complained about the lengths they had to go to in order to produce copy that military authorities deemed 'patriotic,' but the majority, having come from a journalistic tradition well-immersed in partisan behaviour, were not usually against 'doing their bit.'[71] With few exceptions, correspondents' accounts exaggerated Allied gains while deriding both the accomplishments and behaviour of the enemy. Though there were more than 60,000 British casualties during the opening day of the Somme offensive on July 1st, 1916, Canadians only received news about a glorious conquest during which several thousand German soldiers mutinied.[72] Even if not completely ignoring disheartening details, journalists almost always shrouded them in euphemism, or 'High Diction' as Paul Fussell has called it: a 'brisk' or 'sharp' encounter, for instance, actually meant a casualty rate perhaps reaching fifty per cent.[73]

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[69] Lord Beaverbrook quoted in Jeffrey Keshen, *Propaganda and Censorship During Canada's Great War* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1996), 32.

[70] Lord Beaverbrook, *Canada in Flanders: The Official Story of the Canadian Expeditionary Force – Volume I*, 3rd ed., with and introduction by Rt.-Hon. Sir Robert Borden (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1916), 191.

[71] Jeffrey Keshen, *Propaganda and Censorship During Canada's Great War*, 29.

These attitudes reveal something of the state of journalism in the period of the First World War. Reporters' fondness for blatantly biased headlines and stories that relied heavily on patriotism and exaggeration was the mark of a profession that still saw itself as a maker of entertainment, not a transmitter of anything remotely resembling objective news; an industry that did not see the emergence of journalism schools until the Second World War. Correspondents and their editors and publishers saw their function as a literary one, in which articles were not only meant to relay to readers certain up-beat notions of what their brothers and husbands were experiencing at war, but to increase readership numbers, and perhaps most importantly, to contribute to the necessary job of defeating Germany.[74]

Journalists in North America and Britain were aided in their efforts to obscure the realities of the Western Front from their readers at home by military authorities, government officials, and particularly by press censors. In Canada, Lieutenant-Colonel Ernest J. Chambers received authority in 1915 to enforce the newly enshrined War Measures Act by prohibiting sources that criticised military authority, or any persons or organisations caught "assisting or encouraging the enemy, or preventing, embarrassing or hindering the successful prosecution of the war."[75] To enforce this and future regulations, Chambers regularly used tactics ranging from polite reminders to threats of fines as high as $5,000, five years in prison, or both. Chambers ensured that the sanitised and idealised version of army life was also dominant in official dispatches relayed from overseas, and these remained practically the sole interpretation presented to Canadian civilians.[76]

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[72] Ibid.
[73] Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, 76.
[74] Jeffrey Keshen, *Propaganda and Censorship During Canada's Great War*, xii-xiii.

In his press dispatches, as well as in his activities as administrator of both the CWRO and the CWMF, Lord Beaverbrook's work often intersected with that of Chambers, who was most anxious to control the spread of images, as well as text, that he felt contradicted his idealised depiction of war. Thus, while accepting some of Beaverbrook's commissioned Canadian War Records Office photographs like *The Unfailing Cheerfulness of the British Tommy*, he rejected for Canadian consumption other images aimed at raising hatred against Germany by showing, for instance, *Bodies of Men and Horses Amid Wreckage of a French City.*[77] But Chambers' manipulation and direction of the images and documents Beaverbrook had collected did not seem to offend the latter, who proved more than willing to operate in conjunction with the Chief Press-Censor, writing that "It may not be pleasant to issue false news," but if those at home "could be taken into our confidence I feel quite certain they would endorse the scheme."[78]

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[75] Ernest Chambers quoted in Jeffrey Keshen, *Propaganda and Censorship During Canada's Great War* , 65.

[76] Jeffrey Keshen, *Propaganda and Censorship During Canada's Great War*, 66.

[77] Jeffrey Keshen, *Propaganda and Censorship During Canada's Great War*, 106.

[78] Lord Beaverbrook quoted in Jeffrey Keshen, *Propaganda and Censorship During Canada's Great War*, 32.

Peter Buitenhuis has argued in *The Great War of Words: British, American and Canadian Propaganda and Fiction, 1914-1933* that Beaverbrook was the only "author who tried to buck the rigid censorship rules in writing his reports for the home-front. He combined the power of his civilian authority as a representative of the Canadian government and his privileges as a military officer to see and describe things that censorship proscribed."[79] Buitenhuis continues by asserting that Beaverbrook "was able to present a truer account of various battles" than the majority of the other correspondents, and that the "reports [he] sent back to be printed in Canadian and British newspapers…regularly gave the names of units and of officers and men engaged in battle in defiance of censorship rules."[80] His assessment of Beaverbrook's apparent desires to be more truthful in his reportage than others, however, is challenged by numerous sources including Beaverbrook's own writings. The following excerpt from *Canada in Flanders*, for instance, reflects themes common in Beaverbrook's war reportage, such as an equating of war with boyhood games or school exercises, and a focus on the superior mental and physical health of Canadian soldiers:

> Their faces shone with health; their eyes were as bright as those of a troop of schoolboys. They were, in fact, tramping down a long, straight, poplar-lined Flemish highway, with a misty vista of flat ploughed land on either side. They whistled as they marched.[81]

Although Beaverbrook did at times admit mistakes and acknowledge casualties, he continually glossed over failures in Allied strategy and represented Canadians soldiers in a blindingly positive light.. He may not have wholeheartedly approved of censorship tactics, especially when they treaded on his ability to write the stories he wanted in his role as Eye-Witness, but he made a distinction between censorship and propaganda, the latter of which he engaged in actively and supported without question.

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[79] Peter Buitenhuis, *The Great War of Words: British, American and Canadian Propaganda and Fiction, 1914-1933* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987), 80.
[80] Ibid., 98.
[81] Lord Beaverbrook, *Canada in Flanders*, 19.

Despite the naïveté reflected by many, such as columnist William Banks when he wrote in 1915 that "[i]t is not the way of British governments to hide disasters,"[82] Maurice Doll describes how World War I in fact marked a unique turning point in the waging of war for its heavy use of propaganda. While military leaders and strategists were still using battle techniques from the nineteenth century, new weapons and technologies – especially the use of poison gas and machine guns – caused death and destruction previously unimaginable. Since the military machine took so much man-power to maintain, the Great War marked the first concerted effort on the part of governments at war to use propaganda to bolster their efforts.[83]

In Canada, as Jeffrey Keshen describes in *Propaganda and Censorship in Canada's Great War*, controls imposed by military and civilian authorities clearly protected Canadians from upsetting portrayals of combat. The use of new and ever more powerful and destructive technologies – namely submarines, poison gas, machine guns, flame throwers, aircraft, and tanks – culminated in a war atmosphere never before seen or experienced.[84] But Canadians were not allowed to see or know this; for the most part, Beaverbrook, Canadian Press Association journalists, and others involved with gathering and disseminating information, consistently and voluntarily composed copy with an eye towards raising morale and masking the truth. The ability of censors and propagandists like Chambers and Beaverbrook to shape public opinion also resulted from the fact that their unrealistic depictions of war were rarely challenged by soldiers who had returned home, or in their letters and postcards from the Front. In hiding from their family and friends the grim realities of front-line life, some men feared the consequences of challenging military censors, and others simply could not find words to express what they had experienced.[85]

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[82] William Banks, "The Press Censorship," *The Canadian Magazine* (December 1915): 153.

[83] Maurice Doll, *The Poster War: Allied Propaganda Art of the First World War* (Edmonton: Alberta Community Development, 1993), 18.

[84] Bill Rawling, *Surviving Trench Warfare: Technology and the Canadian Corps, 1914-1918* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 3.

For the governments of Canada and Britain during the First World War, the dissemination of war-related materials always carried political ramifications, and the challenge was often one of balancing state security and secrecy with historical accuracy. Beaverbrook himself argued that the best use of propaganda was in the formation of public opinion: "[t]he method," he wrote, "is to tell the truth but to present it in an acceptable form."[86] The making available of certain materials and the withholding of others during the First World War was an attempt to prevent harm being done to the prevailing myth about the war – the notion that Germany was bent on destroying Western civilization and that Britain and her allies were fighting what was essentially a holy war, in which its soldiers could prove their manhood and their bravery, and could even achieve the status of heroes. As Keith Wilson writes, governments are well aware of the fact that both the withholding and the releasing of material gives them scope for 'historical engineering.'[87]

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[85] Jeffrey Keshen, *Propaganda and Censorship During Canada's Great War*, 190-1.

[86] Lord Beaverbrook quoted in Anne Chisholm and Michael Davie, *Lord Beaverbrook: A Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), 158.

[87] Keith Wilson, 'Introduction: Governments, Historians, and 'Historical Engineering' in *Forging the Collective Memory: Government and International Historians through Two World Wars* (Providence: Berghahn Books, 1996), 2.

All information released to the public during the Great War, therefore, had to be assessed for its ability either to confirm the myth or to aid in the creation of new ones. As intermediaries between governments and the public, Beaverbrook and his contemporaries had to weigh the activities of documenting for the good of the nation, and memorialising, also, they believed, for the good of the nation. In the majority of cases it was felt that preserving the peace of mind of Canadian civilians had to take precedence over revealing unpleasant actualities; Canadian interests would plainly not be served by the fixation upon negative and disturbing aspects of the war. Many historians, journalists, columnists and politicians felt it was their duty to be 'patriotic historians,' manipulating the verdict of how the war was to be interpreted and remembered in Canada.[88]

Manipulating the Images of War

Lord Beaverbrook's involvement in media, politics and various assignments in the field of information control during the war unquestionably helped to shape his organisational work at the Canadian War Memorials Fund. That he, already controlling three major British newspapers, became Dominion Eye-Witness, and director of both the CWRO and the CWMF all within a few years at the heart of wartime, certainly suggests that he was using his influence and experience with each project to influence the others. And in the midst of all of this came his appointment in February, 1915 to the post of first-ever Minister of Information in the Empire, and

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[88] Ibid., 12, 20.

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, with a seat in the British Cabinet,[89] a role that saw him deploying the new and powerful weapon of propaganda while also having jurisdiction over much of the news, photography and art work to come out in Britain and Canada throughout the better part of the First World War.

Beaverbrook's own statements about the usefulness of Canadian War Memorials Fund and Canadian War Records Office images in helping with propaganda and recruiting drives reflect the extent to which he felt his various projects to be of use in the construction of optimistic ideas about the war and Canada's part in it, through the manipulation of the public's understanding of what war was like. He felt, specifically, that images that would boost morale would be the most useful to present to the public. For the most part, those were images that either played up the courage and resilience of Allied (specifically Canadian) soldiers, or those that emphasised the perceived brutality and immorality of German troops.

Despite assertions by the Fund's committee that its paintings were intended to act as accurate documentary images, Beaverbrook and his colleagues adhered strongly to the belief that their commissions should fit in with the vast majority of private and government-funded propaganda efforts in Britain and Canada. An enormous proportion of Allied propaganda was devoted to making ruined cathedrals and destroyed farmhouses, all common in CWMF images, symbols of the enemy's "unhealthy desire for destruction."[90] The description of specific works of art in the Fund's catalogues – the attention, or conversely, the complete lack of attention given to particular pieces – tells us a great deal about the way they were received by the committee and the way committee members wished them to be viewed, in turn, by the public.

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[89] Anne Chisholm and Michael Davie, *Lord Beaverbrook: A Life*, 154.
[90] Whitney Warren quoted in Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War*, 63.

To Beaverbrook and his associates, as well countless citizens in Canada and Britain, there seemed no more powerful symbol of Germany's supposed brutality than the remains of Ypres' medieval Flemish Cloth Hall. It was with satisfaction that the Fund's committee approved James Kerr-Lawson's painting depicting the well-known landmark, which had been ruined by German attacks during the First and Second Battles of Ypres in November 1914 and the spring of 1915 (Figure 22). The description accompanying Kerr-Lawson's *The Cloth Hall, Ypres*, in the CWMF catalogue reads: "For four years the iron heel of the enemy slowly trampled the glories of Ypres into dust. Little remains today of the famous Gothic cloth hall, only a part of the central tower."[91] The work, originally exhibited under the title *The Footprint of the Hun*, features a huge shadow cast over the structure, purposefully given the shape of a giant footprint and meant to signify the belief that Germany was not simply an enemy on the battlefield, but was a vicious threat to Western Christian culture, an idea that had been circulated with fervour since Lord Bryce's 1915 *Report of the Committee on Alleged German Outrages* had narrated the German destruction of landmarks in Belgium and the allegedly gruesome treatment of civilians and Allied soldiers.[92] Almost as moving in the eyes of the British and Canadian public were the ruined villages and shattered houses that William Rothenstein and A. Y. Jackson were commissioned to paint. These familiar buildings, large and small, in which men and women had carried out their lives, became for many viewers a reminder of the perceived savagery of German troops.

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[91] Captain Percy Godenrath, *Lest We Forget*, 17.

[92] Alan Young, " 'We Throw the Torch': Canadian Memorials of the Great War and the Mythology of Heroic Sacrifice," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 24, no. 4 (Winter 1989-90): 11.

Committee support for images that echoed current beliefs about the barbarity of Germany was also based upon a more general inclination by Fund organisers for avoiding difficult and disturbing subject-matter, particularly a distaste on the part of Beaverbrook for works of art that openly depicted the dead. Photographer Captain Henry Edward Knobel, hired by Lord Beaverbrook to take pictures for his CWRO photography project recalled the reaction his supervisor had to his work:

> Sir Max (Aitken) [was] very pleased. The only thing which upset him was that the body of a dead German…[had] been covered up before being photographed. Sir Max says "cover up the Canadians before you photograph them as much as you like, but don't bother about the German dead!"[93]

Similarly, cameraman Brooks Carrington noticed that in a number of Beaverbrook's ventures, potentially controversial matter rarely survived the official inspection process. Carrington wrote that, thanks to Beaverbrook, ninety per cent of the footage he took of dead bodies hit the cutting room floor, guaranteeing a sanitised perspective of warfare.[94]

The instances in which the CWMF was supportive of images that depicted unpleasant scenes of war were generally the same as the instances in which the general public and art critics were willing to tolerate such images. Specifically, scenes of death and of suffering were deemed acceptable only if they happened to represent the death and suffering of German soldiers, or if that suffering served to illustrate the evil intentions of the 'diabolical enemy.' Despite the gruesome nature of

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[93] Captain H. E. Knobel as quoted by Captain Wilfred Holt-White in Peter Robertson, "Canadian Photojournalism during the First World War," *History of Photography* 2, no. 1 (January 1978): 41.

[94] Jeffrey Keshen, *Propaganda and Censorship During Canada's Great War*, 37-8.

CWMF artist Derwent Wood's sculpture of a crucified Canadian, entitled *Canada's Golgotha* (Figure 10), it was given much attention by the committee and was often praised by the public: "Among the art objects in the exhibition, nothing excited more curiosity and comment in London last winter than a bronze relief by Captain Derwent Wood, A.R.A., representing a Canadian sergeant crucified to a barn door and surrounded by a group of jeering Huns," wrote one critic.[95] The CWMF committee took advantage of the opportunity to play off of current media excitement about the sculpture and the unsubstantiated story that inspired it, and repeated the tale in its catalogue from a May, 1915, *Toronto Star* article.[96]

As for the Canadian War Memorials Fund exhibitions themselves, the circulation and display of the collection in Québec shortly after the war's end were planned almost exclusively with the intent to aid propaganda efforts in that province. Though Lieutenant-Colonel Parkinson had intended to put the CWMF collection into storage after the Toronto showing in 1919, "for propaganda work [among the French Canadians], it was deemed desirable to go into Montreal."[97] Sponsorship by that city's Art Association was arranged, and the exhibition was opened by the Prince of Wales in October. Montréalers were invited to "[c]ome and live 2 hours with the Canadians behind the lines, in the lines, and before the lines – review the war's tremendous moments – see a great conflict as it has never been granted home folks to see it heretofore."[98]

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[95] A. E. Gallatin, "Canadian War Memorial Show," 1.

[96] Canadian War Records Office, *Canadian War Memorials Exhibition: Burlington House, Piccadilly – January & February1919*, 25-6. The story that appeared in the *Toronto Star* had been cabled from London by Lord Windermere, a member of the House of Lords and a prominent British socialite. The story apparently developed out of a report received from Allied command about an incident involving the crucifixion of a Canadian soldier, a Sergeant Harry Banes or Band. The tale followed similar, more general rumours that had circulated for some time about German practices of bayoneting babies, cutting off the hands of Belgian children, raping Belgian women, using civilians as screens, and firing upon hospitals, but particularly the nailing of enemy soldiers to doors, using bayonets. Alan Young, " 'We Throw the Torch': Canadian Memorials of the Great War and the Mythology of Heroic Sacrifice, " 15. Robert Shipley in *To Mark Our Place: A History of Canadian War Memorials* reasons that the story most likely had its origins in the familiar front-line sight of men hanging on fences of barbed wire. Despite the story's wide acceptance, it was eventually discredited when, in response to German demands for proof of the accusation, the Canadian government commissioned an investigation. The inability to firmly identify the soldier and the disparities in the eye-witness testimony of three men concerning the location and date of the event led the Canadian government to concede that no atrocity had been committed.

[97] Lieutenant-Colonel Parkinson quoted in Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War*, 90.

Unlike in English Canada where the CWMF was used to publicise an unrealistic vision of the war in order to encourage recruitment, in Québec, the effort was one of appeasement. After the federal election returns in December 1917, a mood of discontent had deepened in Québec over the issue of conscription, and for a short time there was a serious threat of trouble, even of violence, which culminated in riots that same year.[99] It is somewhat surprising, then, that the favourite inclusion in the exhibition was yet again Byam Shaw's *The Flag* (Figure 15). As the *Montreal Star*'s critic wrote, it captured "the sacrificial spirit in which the sons of the Empire laid down the greatest gift they had to give that freedom might triumph."[100]

In addition to creating an art collection that skillfully aided in misinforming the public about the war and the men who fought, committee members were guided by the feeling that an exhibition of images that *too* realistically portrayed war, or that focused on its more brutal aspects, was propagandistic and was certainly to be avoided. Colonel Parkinson spent considerable time arguing in his introduction to the 1934 CWMF catalogue, *Lest We Forget*, that far too much emphasis had recently been placed on the horrors of war. The only possible outcome of this type of publicity was the heartache that would be caused to soldiers' loved ones and the damage that would undoubtedly be done to a proper and 'balanced' memory of the war – one that took pains to remember the adventure, the humour, and the camaraderie:

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[98] November 7, 1919 *Montreal Gazette* quoted in Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War*, 90.

[99] Robert Brown and Ramsay Cook, *Canada 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1974), 305.

[100] November 7, 1919 *Montreal Star* quoted in Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War*, 91.

> Among notable developments of recent months has been the publication, in Canada and in the United States, of certain pictures depicting the Great War in all of its bitter and repulsive details. The successors of those so-called 'war books'...which were designed through mercenary or propagandist purposes to deal only with the sordid, the evil of these pictures is that they provide neither a true nor complete record of the war's sacrifices nor achievements. Used in one country in a campaign for 'preparedness,' and elsewhere and simultaneously as propaganda for pacifism, they are selected to appeal to the morbid, without regard for truth for its own sake, or for historical accuracy.[101]

The desire by some to express the grimness of war was taken by Fund officials, among others, as either an unforgivable lack of sympathy for those who had lost loved ones, or as a lack of desire for faithfully presenting the war experience to viewers.

As demonstrated in the preceding sections, there exists an unmistakable tension between Lord Beaverbrook's view of the CWMF as a document of the war and as a propaganda tool – between its ability to reliably record Canada's participation in the war, and its need to strategically and systematically omit images that contradicted a positive view of the war. This tension is further complicated by the reality that at times the Fund's commissions and exhibitions served most convincingly as monuments to the war. In fact, its only true expression as a documentary project is the way in which it served as a record of how Canada and her mother country were preoccupied with venerating and propagandising the events of the First World War.

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[101] Lieutenant-Colonel Parkinson in Captain Percy Godenrath, *Lest We Forget*, 5.

Memorialising Canada at the Front

Despite continued assurances that its collection stood as a grouping of accurate documentary war art and that its artists were dedicated to producing realistic renderings of their experiences at the Front, the CWMF committee was rarely willing to tolerate depictions of war that did not celebrate Canadian soldiers and the Allied cause. The CWMF collection and the touring exhibition of its works acted, in essence, as a grouping of visual tributes to the war and the men who served – directing how Canadians saw and remembered the war through its visual and written accounts.

What is perhaps most curious about the Fund's role as a memorial was Beaverbrook's ability to conceive of memorials and records as essentially one and the same. As Beaverbrook wrote in his report to the Canadian government in 1919 on the activities of the Fund:

> Lord Rothermere, the proprietor of the *Daily Mirror*, has very generously taken over the picture-postcard rights attaching to the official Canadian documentary photographs. He has guaranteed a minimum profit of £500 on their sale, and will turn over all the proceeds to the Canadian War Memorial Fund. The object of this fund is to perpetuate the memory of Canadian heroes by the painting of their pictures or by the erection of memorials.[102]

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[102] Lord Beaverbrook, *Canadian War Records Office Reports – 1916-1919*, 6.

Through this rather practical description of a routine transaction, Beaverbrook reveals in striking fashion that his focus on record-making coexisted peacefully with his intentions to memorialise the war and the country's share in it.

Beaverbrook felt strongly that the Fund should be dedicated to showing Canadians a record of what the country had achieved from 1914 to 1918, but that this demonstration should be restricted to images that would inspire and console. Works in the CWMF collection could do this by leaving out distasteful aspects of warfare, and even by conveying their message on a monumental scale. While paintings and sketches of various sizes were produced by commissioned artists, it was the proposed series of forty immense paintings that was to be the crown jewel of the collection. Lord Rothermere's 1919 brochure released to advertise and fundraise for the construction of the planned CWMF gallery, described in glowing terms the monumental character of the works commissioned to decorate the building's central hall: "Major Augustus John's gigantic design, measuring 40 ft. x 12 ft…forms a class in itself and constitutes a synthesis of War into which the artist has compressed his entire experience of five months at the front with the Canadian Forces."[103] These forty large panels were dedicated to commemorating Canada's victories and not to showing any of the less tasteful aspects of war. In fact, most were conceived as visual celebrations of Canada's participation in the battles at Ypres, Vimy Ridge, and Courcelette, and are filled with historical inaccuracies, and conventional and heroic battle-painting imagery – valiant officers leading their men forward, puffs of smoke, and wide panoramic views.[104]

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[103] Lord Rothermere, *The Housing of the Canadian War Memorials*, 2-3.

Despite words of caution from Sir Edmund Walker and Eric Brown who believed the project to produce the forty grand works would be plagued by problems, Beaverbrook insisted that this part of the scheme was far too important to exclude. The favourite of these immense commemorative images amongst the Fund's committee members was, of course, John Byam Shaw's *The Flag*, which was described for the London exhibition, Image #10 in the catalogue, as "[a] memorial to those Canadians who willingly gave their most beloved for the honour of The Flag and the upholding of Freedom, Justice, and Right."[105] Organisers were so enamoured with the image and all that it conveyed that a colour reproduction of it was eagerly selected to become the front image of the souvenir CWMF volume published by Lord Beaverbrook's Canadian War Records Office in 1919.

Critics and the public likewise lavished the greatest attention and praise on this single work and positive reviews of it were seen in newspaper columns after every exhibition of the Canadian War Memorials – in London, New York, Toronto and Montréal. The oil painting depicts a Canadian soldier – seemingly sleeping peacefully though actually intended to be dead - draped in the Red Ensign, lying across the feet of the statue of an immense lion. Beneath him, a crowd of women, old men, and boys are seen in traditional attitudes of mourning. The painting, meant to symbolise and celebrate Canada's sacrifice to the Mother Country, and very much resembling a monument in its own right, struck a chord with spectators. The *Canadian Bookman* called it "a remarkable composition,"[106] while the *Toronto World* claimed that, of all the works, Byam Shaw's left "the most lasting impression" on visitors.[107]

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[104] Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War*, 69-70.

[105] Canadian War Records Office, *Canadian War Memorials Exhibition: Burlington House, Piccadilly – January & February 1919*, 1.

Not only did many of the works of art in the CWMF collection, such as Byam Shaw's, look and act like monuments to the war, but the exhibition itself functioned as a memorial until the period when it ceased to tour. This was especially true of the collection and its displays after the Armistice. The Fund had a more prominent propagandising role during the war when Beaverbrook and his committee perceived a need for images that would inspire a positive outcome. This function was to a great extent substituted after 1918 by a monumentalising role – for while propaganda was no longer needed to fan public hatred of Germany or to spur men into recruiting stations, there was a great need for images that would console and shape an inspirational memory of what the war had been like and what it meant to Canada.

Beaverbrook's promotion of the exhibitions always highlighted them as events that would honour the activities of soldiers. It was widely felt, and certainly so by the CWMF committee, that soldiers had not lost their lives in the war, but had sacrificed them. The right way to honour those acts of selflessness, therefore, was to construct a truly memorable experience – an event that would pay tribute to the fallen by highlighting only the positive aspects of their wartime experiences. To have offered a more accurate account would have reflected, in Beaverbrook's mind, unfavourably upon the soldiers and their sacrifice. This concern was manifest in

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[106] October 1919 *Canadian Bookman* quoted in Jonathan Vance, *Death So Noble*, 108.
[107] September 1919 *Toronto World* quoted in Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War*, 90.

Beaverbrook's and his committee's particular concern for including and promoting images that did not question the war in any meaningful fashion.

Yet while actions taken by Beaverbrook and others to instill certain concepts about the war into Canada's collective understanding of the events of 1914 to 1918 are problematic, their genuine belief in the value of commemoration was strong. As Beaverbrook wrote:

> These men dared greatly and suffered greatly in the heat of the sun and the frozen mud of winter, and their story must never be allowed to perish with them.[108]

This type of statement, common in Beaverbrook's writings, speaks of a commitment to the soldiers he was representing. Of concern to him was the production and dissemination of images and 'records' that dwelt on the purposefulness and heroism of war as opposed to its horror and futility. Additionally, preferred images were those that contributed to the sense that the war had marked the birth of Canada by implying that in war, the nation's welfare as a whole was served by the sacrifices of its individuals. For Beaverbrook and his colleagues, there was simply no such thing as 'dispassionate history'.

Perhaps the most ambitious demonstration of the Fund's memorialising function can be seen in the efforts to permanently house the collection. The plan was begun while the war was still underway, and continued long into the inter-war period, and had it been successful, it would have guaranteed the Fund's collection an enduring place in Canada's collective memory of the war. As I will explore in chapter three, less obvious but equally relevant to the Fund's transmission of positive and unrealistic images of war to Canadians was its role as a memorialising exhibition which toured the country's large city centres from the war's end until the early 1930s.

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[108] Lord Beaverbrook, *Canadian War Records Office Reports – 1916-1919*, 4.

CHAPTER 3

Memory and Memorials

With an understanding of the overlapping and conflicting purposes set out for the Canadian War Memorials Fund by its organisers, its participant artists, its critics in the art world, and its viewing audience, I want to focus now on one specific role the Fund assumed – that of a memorial to Canadian soldiers in World War I. Memorialising was such a central part of the existence of the Fund that it was incorporated into the project's very title, and yet the CWMF today has not retained the position of a prominent war memorial in Canada. This final chapter will explore the reasons why the Fund in all three of its manifestations – the art work it commissioned, the public exhibitions, and the planned art gallery in Ottawa – failed to realise its full potential as a lasting monument to Canada's experience of the First World War. As I will demonstrate, the ultimate failure of the Fund in its most important role as a memorial was the result of its inability to consistently and convincingly rival other forms of commemoration that emerged in the inter-war period.

In Pursuit of a War Art Gallery

In the administrative reports Lord Beaverbrook submitted to the Canadian federal government in 1919, he and Lord Rothermere outlined their aspirations for the construction of a magnificent gallery to house their Canadian War Memorials Fund collection: "We feel…that this collection will have to be housed in a suitable manner, so that it may be an enduring possession for the people of the Dominion."[1] As this statement implies, housing the art collection was, for the CWMF committee, a crucial step in the successful completion of the project. Though serious planning for a gallery had not begun until sometime late in 1917, a year after the Fund was established, Beaverbrook had expressed from the start a strong conviction that the collection would be best preserved for future Canadians in a permanent display space.

The architect invited to design the Fund's war memorial building was Edwin Alfred Rickards, an Englishman well known in the cultural circles of Edwardian London, from which he was introduced to Paul Konody, and ultimately, to the rest of the CWMF committee. The gallery was his last major commission and at the time of his hiring in 1918, he was a lieutenant in the British Army; his services were therefore provided free as part of his duties.[2] This detail must certainly have appealed to both Beaverbrook and Rothermere, in view of the fact that they had struggled at various times to keep the Fund afloat and had even donated large sums of their own money to do so.

Rickards, a Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects, was considered a master of the Baroque style. He had designed a number of buildings and monuments before he undertook his plan for the CWMF gallery, including Westminster's Central Hall in London, Cardiff's Municipal Buildings and the King Edward VII Memorial in Bristol, but none of these was on the scale of the structure conceived by Beaverbrook, and certainly none shared the dual function of art gallery and memorial envisioned for the CWMF design.[3] Rickards' plan was officially revealed in a 1919 brochure entitled *The Housing of the Canadian War Memorials*, written by Lord Rothermere and published by his own press house (Figure 12).

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[1] Lord Beaverbrook, *Canadian War Records Office Reports – 1916-1919, Including a Report of the Executive Committee of the Canadian War Memorials Fund*, (London: publisher unknown, 1919), 7.

[2] Laura Brandon, "The Canadian War Memorial That Never Was," *Canadian Military History* 7, no. 4 (Autumn 1998): 47-8.

What is striking about the illustrations and plans included in Rothermere's brochure is the manner in which the proposed building is presented; the enormous, showy structure, inspired by grand classical buildings in Europe, is portrayed first and foremost as a monument. The building was planned with memorials so much in mind that the very shape of the structure reflected the themes of bravery and religious sacrifice generated by the war. As R. F. Wodehouse, the National Gallery of Canada's Curator of War Art in the 1960s later described the plans for the structure,

> [t]he rotunda under the dome, where the main staircase comes up from the floor at ground level [was to consist of] four main galleries with short crossarms which form the pattern of the crusader or jerusalem cross; and four large oval galleries between the arms of the cross.[4]

The decision by the architect and CWMF organisers to incorporate the shape of an enormous cross was certainly deliberate. Given that the building was intended to house a memorial collection of art work depicting the exploits of Canadians in what was believed to have been a righteous war against German militarism and tyranny, the symbolism of the crucifix was quite appropriate.

The building's surroundings were also calculated to contribute to its commemorative air. The structure was to be preceded on the avenue leading up to it by a triumphal arch, surmounted by an heroic sculpture inscribed with the inspirational words "As many sons of Canada, as kept her honour free. So many and no less shall make her glorious in the peace to be."[5] Lords Beaverbrook and Rothermere were clearly expressing the view that their CWMF building would be far more effective and memorable if it incorporated carefully considered design choices, oriented toward creating a gallery building steeped in the forms of commemoration seen in conventional monuments. They were also expressing the view, intentionally or not, that a grand galley building would be better placed to appeal to and sustain the interest of Canadians than the art works contained within it. No matter how exceptional they believed their completed collection of art to be, without a gallery, it was simply not the grand gift to the Dominion that they envisioned.

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[3] Lord Beaverbrook, *Canadian War Records Office Reports – 1916-1919*, 7.

[4] R. F. Wodehouse, "Lord Beaverbrook's Plan for a Suitable Building to House the Canadian War Memorials," *Organization of Military Museums in Canada* publication II (1978-9): 4.

Though the designs for the gallery were all but complete by 1919, construction plans were stalled by the repeated intervention of National Gallery officials. Although the anonymous editor of R. F. Wodehouse's article, *Lord Beaverbrook's Plan for a Suitable Building to House the Canadian War Memorials*, has argued against the notion that NGC trustee chair Sir Edmund Walker and director Eric Brown had an active role in bringing about the eventual demise of the CWMF gallery,[6] correspondence and reports from the period confirm that the two men did indeed have a negative impact on Beaverbrook's plan. Certainly National Gallery representatives had a vested interest in ensuring that Beaverbrook's building did not come into existence; they were concerned that Beaverbrook's plan posed a genuine threat to their own aspirations of housing Canada's national art collection. What funding and support they did give along the way was always offered with the real hope that a National Historical Gallery would replace the war art building.

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[5] Lord Rothermere, *The Housing of the Canadian War Memorials* – brochure (London: by the author, 1919), 12.

[6] R. F. Wodehouse, "Lord Beaverbrook's Plan for a Suitable Building to House the Canadian War Memorials," 6. Originally published by Wodehouse in 1970, this article was reprinted with additional comments from an unknown editorial source in 1978-9.

Walker had been both suspicious and critical of Beaverbrook's proposal from its earliest days of development, raising concerns about a project that he feared would draw government support and funding away from National Gallery interests.[7] Walker's colleague, Eric Brown, who had been curator of the National Gallery since 1910, also had misgivings about Beaverbrook's gallery project. He had long felt that the National Gallery's very survival depended upon securing a building in which to house the country's growing art collection, "a beautiful and permanent home on one of the finest sites of this city."[8]

Furthermore, both men felt that the war art commissioned by the Fund ought to be housed within a larger Canadian art collection. Brown in particular, felt that the CWMF works should be recognised above all else as examples of national art. He wanted them placed within the setting of the Canadian gallery so that the CWMF pieces could be given proper context by their inclusion amongst other Canadian works. Walker and Brown spoke of the possibility of placing the Fund's collection in its own rooms in a new national building on Sussex Drive, which, Walker told Beaverbrook in a letter in January 1919, would also house a new national archives wing.[9] Unbeknownst to Beaverbrook, however, both Walker and Brown doubted the continued appeal of the war art collection. They felt "like all records of things that the world will want to forget," it would "steadily decline in popularity, if not in value," and in the end, leave the National Gallery with its own building, removing any need to continually display the large CWMF collection.[10]

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[7] For a more detailed account of Lord Beaverbrook's struggle to have a Canadian war art gallery built, and the involvement of National Gallery representatives, refer to Laura Brandon's article "The Canadian War Memorial That Never Was," 45-54.

[8] Eric Brown quoted in Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War*, 38.

[9] Laura Brandon, "The Canadian War Memorial That Never Was," 50.

For his part, Beaverbrook objected strongly to NGC proposals to accommodate the CWMF collection, largely because the amount of space his war art would be allocated – just under 3,500 square feet of exhibition room according to the architect hired by the National Gallery Frank Darling – was far less than that offered by Rickard's design.[11] As such, Beaverbrook and his fellow committee members continued their efforts to promote their own gallery project. In 1919, Beaverbrook's CWRO released *Art and War*, a book which featured lush colour reproductions of selected CWMF paintings – for the most part traditional works favoured by the committee – and a lengthy article by Paul Konody. The special edition book was released with the main intent of publicising and fundraising for the gallery project. In it, Konody addressed and challenged the proposal offered by National Gallery representatives directly, stating that "the importance of the proper housing of the collection cannot be overestimated. Such a series of pictures can never be housed adequately or exhibited appropriately in the manner of a general exhibition gallery" because only a gallery focused on the art produced during the war would give the collection a proper framework. He argued that there would be no excuse for failure to give these works a suitable home, because they "have a message to the future. They are a memorial of sacrifice and heroism, expressive of a concentration of effort and production…which emanates from a complete and distinctive period."[12]

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[10] Eric Brown quoted in Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War*, 38.

[11] Laura Brandon, "The Canadian War Memorial That Never Was," 45-46.

[12] Canadian War Records Office, *Art and War: Canadian War Memorials*, with an article by P. G. Konody (London: Colour Magazine Ltd., 1919), 15.

As evidenced in the statements above, the issue of the limited space that would be allocated to the war art in Brown's and Walker's proposal was only a small point of contention. Of greater importance to Beaverbrook, Rothermere and Konody was the strongly held belief that the paintings and prints in the Fund's collection needed to be housed separately from other art works or objects, whether those were the art works in the NGC, the war-related items collected by the Canadian War Records Office – such as documents and letters – or the objects gathered by official government archivist Arthur Doughty, such as medals, weapons and uniforms. In a telegram Beaverbrook sent to Sir Edmund Walker in January 1919, he firmly outlined that he and the CWMF "Committee would expect [a] free site from Government [and the c]ommittee here feel very strongly that paintings must be housed separately from war trophies" and other cultural items.[13] CWMF organisers were standing firm in their belief that the collection was worthy of being housed independently and in a truly grand setting.

This sentiment was not shared by Eric Brown and Sir Edmund Walker. Part of the unwillingness of National Gallery officials to support Beaverbrook's gallery project was their belief in the aesthetic inferiority of the images that the Canadian War Memorials Fund scheme had produced, particularly their belief in the worthlessness of images that depicting the war overseas. In two essays, "Painting the War at Home" (date unknown) and "Canadian War Art to Order" (published in 1918 in the *Christian Science Monitor*), Eric Brown outlined what he believed should be the real focus of the CWMF – the production of home-front images, arguing that they

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[13] Lord Beaverbrook quoted in Laura Brandon, "The Canadian War Memorial That Never Was," 47.

"had vastly more pictorial possibilities than the front line trenches."[14] Walker had also been critical of the works produced by the Fund, complaining that Christopher Nevinson's futurist paintings were not sufficiently evocative of the experience of war, while those of the conservative Royal Academy painter Richard Jack were, surprisingly, far too descriptive: "the public of the future is not likely to appreciate such a realistic treatment of war."[15]

Despite differences in opinion surrounding the validity of the war art, the committees of both the CWMF and the NGC struggled in the years after the Armistice with similar difficulties, principally the lack of support or interest from government and the scarcity of available funds. By 1919, both groups were beginning to take note of the general difficulty on the part of war-related agencies to raise public and government money, and over the next couple of years, Walker and Beaverbrook competed for the attention of politicians in Ottawa. The CWMF's financial situation, though of concern by 1919 according to Lord Beaverbrook's own reports, only worsened as the years passed.[16] A number of artists were yet to be paid and some were never remunerated, even selling or destroying works that were intended for the Fund's collection.

By 1921, it seemed that Walker and Brown had come out on top when the CWMF collection, nearly a thousand items, was transferred by the federal government to the NGC's custody.[17] The National Gallery made use of this reality to again strengthen their case for a single new national art facility, but as Walker discovered, government seemed no more willing to co-operate in erecting a national gallery than one to house the war art. In response to a letter to the Department of Public Works, he received only a polite explanation that funds could simply not be allocated to a national gallery project: "[w]ith the urgent necessity for public buildings to carry on the ordinary Government services, I am not hopeful that we will secure the appropriation that would construct the [national gallery] building required."[18]

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[14] Eric Brown quoted in Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War*, 51.

[15] Sir Edmund Walker quoted in Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War*, 38.

[16] See, for instance, page 8 of Lord Beaverbrook, *Canadian War Records Office Reports – 1916-1919,* in which Beaverbrook describes the financial standing of the CWMF in November 1918, already carrying a deficit of nearly £10,000.

The following year, Beaverbrook was growing fearful that the construction of a CWMF gallery would never be realised, and his concerns were heightened by the fact that NGC officials had found little opportunity to display the works with which they had been entrusted[19] and by increasing pressure to disperse the collection, compromising what Beaverbrook believed to be its ability to convey its unique account of the war. Derwent Wood's controversial sculpture depicting the alleged crucifixion of a Canadian by German soldiers (Figure 10) was removed from the collection in 1920 at the specific request of the German government. National Gallery officials agreed to keep the sculpture and all photographs of it in permanent storage after receiving the following request:

> In view of the feelings aroused by the publicity given to the alleged incident and kept alive by persons whose motives may be open to question, it is suggested that the bronze group should be packed up and placed in

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[17] R. F. Wodehouse, "Lord Beaverbrook's Plan for a Suitable Building to House the Canadian War Memorials," 1.

[18] J. H. King quoted in Laura Brandon, "The Canadian War Memorial That Never Was," 52.

[19] Hugh Halliday, "The Senate Paintings: A Forgotten Memorial of the Great War," *The Beaver* 75, no. 5 (October/November 1995): 6.

> permanent storage, so that the Government may be protected against the embarrassment of its being exhibited or photographed at any further time as the portrayal of an event.[20]

Another sign of the government's growing lack of interest in the war art gallery was the transfer, in July 1925, of the historical works collected by Beaverbrook to the Public Archives of Canada: paintings by Joshua Reynolds, Thomas Lawrence, George Romney, and the famed *Death of Wolfe* by Sir Benjamin West.[21] In a move that further diminished the coherency of the collection, the following year, Parliament selected eight of the Fund's large panels to decorate the new Senate Chamber, completed after the destruction of the Centre Block by fire in 1916[22] (Figure 23).

Not willing to relinquish all hope for a gallery, another effort was made by CWMF staff to raise money with the release of Captain Percy Godenrath's *Lest We Forget: The Story of the Canadian War Memorials Collection of Art – the Gift of the Army to the Nation* in 1934. In it Godenrath praised the "gift of the historical paintings" to the people of Canada, which he argued was "alone almost equal in value to the sum necessary to erect a suitable building worthy to house this War Memorial

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[20] Acting deputy minister of Militia and Defence in 1930, H. W. Brown, quoted in Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War*, 103.

[21] Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War*, 44.

[22] Hugh Halliday, "The Senate Paintings: A Forgotten Memorial of the Great War," 6. Considering the ability of many of the CWMF's paintings – particularly the committee's favoured series of forty large panels – to embody memorial-like qualities, it is interesting to note that the eight large paintings selected for the Senate included James Kerr-Lawson's *Arras, the Dead City* and *The Cloth Hall, Ypres*, [formerly *The Footprint of the Hun* (Figure 22)] – two scenes of implied German destruction of French and Belgian landmarks – the stirringly patriotic *Landing of the First Canadian Division at St. Nazaire* by Edgar Bundy, and William Rothenstein's stoic *The Watch on the Rhine*. Not surprisingly, no works by William Roberts, Paul Nash, Percy Wyndham Lewis or Fred Varley were selected.

Collection."[23] In keeping with the CWMF committee's stance that the collection of works required separate housing, Godenrath emphasised the value that the collection could have for Canada as a lasting memorial to the war if only it were immediately and properly situated. In his writing, he channeled his frustrations toward other monuments being erected across the country, attacking their aesthetic inferiority and their selfish consumption of government resources. He spoke strongly of what he called a "national disgrace" which had allowed "ample public funds…for other memorials, such as the hurculean [*sic*] pile of stone and statuary which has been under construction for some years" while the CWMF collection "is still, after fourteen years, allowed to remain in storage."[24]

But appeals were again unsuccessful and the remainder of the items still held under the CWMF stayed in storage, unseen and un-catalogued until the 1960s. As luck would have it, when the National Gallery of Canada building was finally constructed in 1988, it was in the location chosen by Beaverbrook and his committee seventy years earlier for their un-built war memorial gallery. But by the time the NGC moved to this site, the majority of the War Memorials paintings – together with some 4,500 works completed under a similar scheme during the Second World War – were no longer held by the National Gallery of Canada; they had been transferred to a third body in 1971, the Canadian War Museum.[25] It is interesting to note that all other material collected and displayed by Lord Beaverbrook's CWRO throughout the

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[23] Captain Percy Godenrath, *Lest We Forget: The Story of the Canadian War Memorials Collection of Art – the Gift of the Army to the Nation* – exhibition catalogue (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1934): 10.

[24] Ibid. It is unclear whether Godenrath is referring here to the *Great Response* memorial, on which construction began in Ottawa in 1926 or more likely, to the Vimy Memorial in France, begun in 1925.

[25] Hugh Halliday, "The Senate Paintings: A Forgotten Memorial of the Great War," 6.

First World War such as trophies, medals, photographs, machinery, weapons, and letters and documents, avoided the fate suffered by the CWMF art works and are still on permanent display at the War Museum in Ottawa. Like Beaverbrook's paintings, they were deposited into the government's custody at the close of the war, and they too were displayed in an exhibition space, yet these objects seem to have had the ability to transmit the memory of the war to Canadians in a way that the Fund's art collection could not.

As shown, the cost of the CWMF gallery – as well as the intervention of NGC officials who were understandably concerned that Beaverbrook's plan would jeopardise efforts to have the national art collection housed – were no doubt factors that contributed to the inability of CWMF organisers to permanently house the art collection. But why was it that the war art collection could not garner the kind of support it needed when countless sculptures, commemorative plaques, monuments and cenotaphs were being built across the country – some extremely large and costly?[26] Answering that question will require an examination of the ways in which Canadians structured their remembrance of the war, and the characteristics of conventional monuments that successfully helped them to do so.

Monument and Ritual

Despite the difficulties Lord Beaverbrook encountered in his attempts to construct a permanent war art gallery, the Canadian War Memorials Fund collection would surely have been housed if it had managed to make the kind of impact on the Canadian people that was required in the creation of conventional monuments after the war. So what was it about the Fund's collection and its exhibitions that failed to create a profound emotional connection with Canadians? The answer lies partly in appreciating the tremendously powerful effect of ritual and monument in constructing the kind of emotional landscapes that were desired by Canadians in the inter-war years.

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[26] Nearly all First World War monuments built in Canada received some combination of government and public funding, with the exception of those comparatively few that were paid for solely by businesses.

Many historians have acknowledged the complexity of the manner in which the memory of the First World War was constructed for and by Canadians. Paul Fussell has written of the often parallel British experience that the Great War, a tumultuous experience for both soldiers and those at home, proved so incredulous that it defied description in conventional ways. In Fussell's opinion, the encounter with the war had been so raw, so disturbing, that traditional vocabulary and iconography were useless to describe it; new, modern means by which to remember it had to be created.[27]

In order to demonstrate his argument, Fussell compares, for instance, two poems written during the Great War, one which used the Victorian / Edwardian vocabulary of pre-war literature that he calls 'High Diction' and the other, which used new and modern forms of expression such as irony, absurdity and metaphor. The first of these poems, *In Flanders Fields* by Canadian army doctor John McCrae, is described by Fussell as hollow and contrived, unabashedly appealing to emotion, using the largest number of romantic war motifs possible: red poppies, the singing of larks, the Christ-like sacrifice of soldiers, sunset and sunrise as symbols of death and resurrection, the association of soldiers' graves with beds, and so on. Fussell concludes that the poem was essentially nothing more than an emotion-grabbing contrivance, intended to help raise morale and improve recruiting efforts in Canada.[28]

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[27] Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), 139.

In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
    That mark our place; and in the sky
    The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
    Loved and were loved, and now we lie
    In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
    The torch; be yours to hold it high.
    If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
    In Flanders fields.[29]

On the other hand, works like Isaac Rosenberg's *Break of Day in the Trenches*, another 'poppy' poem, were far more successful, he argues, because they reflected a new understanding of war and of the modern world. Prolonged trench warfare, with its collective isolation, Fussell argues, created certain modern trends in public thinking and awareness, including a sense of irony about the war, a fixation upon wasteland imagery, and a psychological polarisation manifested in a 'versus' mentality. Modernism's emergence in the field of literary and artistic production, he concludes, was a response to the horrors of war.[30] The grimness of Rosenberg's poem, its hopelessness, its acknowledgement of filth and murder in the trenches, replaced previous accounts that had emphasised heroic actions, grand victories, and glorious deaths because the language of these earlier narratives could not encompass people's newfound knowledge and experience of the war.

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[28] Ibid., 248-50.

[29] John McCrae, *In Flanders Fields* published 1915, in Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, 249-50.

[30] Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, 75-6.

> The darkness crumbles away –
> It is the same old druid Time as ever.
> Only a live thing leaps my hand –
> A queer sardonic rat –
> As I pull the parapet's poppy
> To stick behind my ear.
> Droll rat, they would shoot you if they knew
> Your cosmopolitan sympathies.
> Now you have touched this English hand
> You will do the same to a German –
> Soon, no doubt, if it be your pleasure
> To cross the sleeping green between.
> It seems you inwardly grin as you pass
> Strong eyes, fine limbs, haughty athletes,
> Less chanced than you for life,
> Bonds to the whims of murder,
> Sprawled in the bowels of the earth,
> The torn fields of France.
> What do you see in our eyes
> At the shrieking iron and flame
> Hurled through still heavens?
> What quaver – what heart aghast?
> Poppies whose roots are in men's veins
> Drop, and are ever dropping;
> But mine in my ear is safe,
> Just a little white with the dust.[31]

Jonathan Vance has a different view of the war experience and the way it was expressed and remembered, at least in Canada. Vance, to use the same example of the war poems described above, does not contend that McCrae's poem is aesthetically better than others written during and after the conflict. In fact, he agrees with

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[31] Isaac Rosenberg, *Break of Day in the Trenches* written summer 1916, in Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, 250-1.

Fussell's assessment that Rosenberg's work is far more compelling than that of McCrae, whose poem, first published anonymously in *Punch* magazine in 1915,[32] was much more an idealisation of battle than any sort of accurate retelling of the experience of modern warfare. Additionally, *In Flanders Fields*, with its plea for the next generation to "take up our quarrel with the foe," strikes as a thinly-veiled championing of the impulse to continue to make war.

He disagrees with Fussell's contention, however, that the First World War marked the beginning of a tendency to "domesticate the fantastic and normalize the unspeakable."[33] Vance maintains that while the war created in some participants and onlookers a desire to communicate their anguish in the form of modernist critiques, the majority of Canadians fell back on nineteenth-century forms of expression to describe and remember the events of 1914 to 1918. Just as in war-time when propaganda gave Canadians a comprehensible means of understanding the death and destruction overseas, interwar public memory continued to reflect themes of victory and righteousness rather than sorrow and loss.[34] In Canada at least, poems, novels, war memoirs and countless other cultural and social activities continued to focus upon the victory, not ~~the cost~~ of the war. It is McCrae's poem, after all, that is quoted or set to music at nearly all Remembrance Day services held to this day because it is that poem that successfully captured the Canadian public's imagination in the years following the war.

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[32] Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War*, 19.

[33] Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, 74.

[34] Jonathan Vance, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997), 90.

A positive recollection of the events of 1914 to 1918 was developed and adhered to, concludes Vance, because it served several important functions: comforting those who had lost loved ones, educating children about the responsibilities of good citizenship, drawing together Canadians of diverse backgrounds, and inspiring them to achieve ever greater things.[35] Of most importance, an optimistic remembrance was essential to maintaining the view that 'Canada was born on Vimy Ridge,' that the First World War marked the glorious period when Canada became a nation. As Vance writes, it could achieve what "Confederation had not yet been able to do, for one simple reason: Confederation was merely a political incident. The Great War was a national force."[36]

But how was it that this perception of the war was so prevalent in Canada? How was it accepted by so many, even those who had experienced the harsh realities of the Front, or who had lost loved ones? The answers lie in understanding how private memories of the war in Canada became the root of public memorialisation. The difference between remembering and memorialising is the distinction between the private and the civic. While remembering is a personal act of recalling events or experiences, memorialising is the process by which many individual memories are incorporated into the collective network, and are then recalled by a larger whole. As Catherine Moriarty has described, though private and collective memory are separate entities, the objective of societies is to secure and unify memory into a nationallyagreed upon cohesion.[37] This process of unifying memory was certainly visible in Canada after the Armistice, through the veneration of certain objects, and the observation of ritual commemorative ceremonies.

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[35] Ibid., 9.
[36] Ibid., 227.

Collective remembrance is highly complex and not easily understood but in its simplest terms we can understand it as the act of gathering bits and pieces of the past, and joining them together in public.[38] The act of transforming personal memory into collective remembrance works to connect individuals and their families to the rest of the nation, first through the creation of or gathering together of items that aid memory[39] – items that carry with them some sort of weight to transmit ideas about an event and the way it should be recollected. Artifacts, souvenirs, photographs of lived events, for instance, are all memory triggers, as are statues of historical figures and monuments of wars.

But simple objects require ritual to enhance their value and meaning; observances that ensure that select memories of the war remain at the forefront of the public's consciousness. This is the act of constructing sites and experiences of remembrance in which objects can be venerated and key narratives can be told many times over. Armistice Day and Remembrance Day provided such occasions for Canadians after the First World War. It was believed by most that raising a war memorial or recording a soldier's name in an honour roll was only a part of society's obligation to the remembrance of the dead. As Alan Young explains, Remembrance

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[37] Catherine Moriarty, "Private Grief and Public Remembrance: British First World War Memorials' in Martin Evans and Ken Lunn, eds., *War and Memory in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Berg, 1997), 125.

[38] Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan, eds., *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 6.

[39] John Gillis, ed., "Memory and Identity: The History of a Relationship" in *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 3.

Day ceremonies were and remain deeply serious and carefully staged rituals[40] – a national occasion on which the war dead are venerated.[41] In order to sustain memories of lived events, both individuals and societies fashion a system of rehearsal and ritual that makes the recall of memories easier. Through the construction of monuments and the observance of days of commemoration, Canadians translated their private memories of the war into a community experience. In this way, personal reaction was given worth by serving as a source of community pride and by being incorporated into the collective understanding, so that even those who had not suffered private loss could participate in public remembrance.[42]

The failure of the Canadian War Memorials collection to secure a location and an opportunity for permanent display in the period after the war, therefore, cannot be explained with the reasoning that Canadians were simply not interested in memorialising World War I. The Fund's relative success as a touring exhibition of war art until the 1930s attests to the fact that Canadians were responsive to the largely idealised vision of war that Lord Beaverbrook's project conveyed. What was at play, rather, was the general inadequacy of an exhibition of paintings and prints to permanently encompass and reflect the emotional nature of Canada's response to the Great War. Canadians' reaction to the war proved visceral, not intellectual, and they preferred clear and powerful means of honouring the dead and celebrating the 'birth' of the nation. I will argue that traditional monuments built in Canada after the war were more successful than the Canadian War Memorials Fund because they were able not only to reflect the personal experiences of returned soldiers and their families, but to communicate those private experiences and memories to the larger society, and to mould them so that the messages they transmitted could be embraced by all.

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[40] The first of these commemorative holidays was declared on November 6th, 1919 by acting Prime Minister Sir George Foster.

[41] Alan Young, " 'We Throw the Torch': Canadian Memorials of the Great War and the Mythology of Heroic Sacrifice," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 24, no. 4 (Winter 1989-90): 5.

[42] Catherine Moriarty, "Private Grief and Public Remembrance: British First World War Memorials," 138.

The Exhibition as Memorial

If a society's shared memory is formed by the presence of objects, such as monuments, and the rituals that are observed in venerating them, then the potential importance of museums and exhibitions in communities is evident; these places in which a society's historical artifacts are stored and displayed help to shape a community's memories. Museum and gallery exhibitions assist in determining how nations perceive their own past and why they remember certain parts of their history over others. The objects put on display are acknowledged to be valuable because they are given the opportunity of being seen, experienced, and preserved.[43] "Preservation in the museum fixes the memory of entire cultures through representative objects by selecting what 'deserves' to be kept, remembered, [and] treasured," writes Susan Crane, "[a]rtifacts and customs are saved out of time."[44] What is chosen for preservation and display in a national museum or gallery communicates to a society the worth of those objects and, therefore, the memories associated with them.

The relationship between museums and memory is so interconnected that each can be thought of as existing to serve the other. For instance, while museums and the exhibitions within them house the artifacts that help a nation to form a collective memory of past events, those same memories can help to guarantee the preservation of objects and items deemed essential to that society. These items, whether photographs, works of art, tools, or diaries are kept as the records of a society's achievements and experiences. As Crane writes, the objects are essentially "articulated memories removed from the mental world and literally placed in the physical world."[45] The past is made present through musealisation; public institutions, archives and museums that store and display heritage contribute to the process of storing and altering memory.

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[43] Susan Crane, ed., *Museums and Memory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 2.
[44] Ibid., 3.

An exhibition can help to form memory in a number of ways, first by the space or building in which it is shown – a display at a town fair speaks differently, for instance, than one arranged in the grand rooms at Windsor Castle. An exhibition can also communicate a great deal by the selection of objects contained within it and the more portable version of these objects, the catalogues and pamphlets offered or sold to visitors. As already discussed in this chapter, the Canadian War Memorials Fund committee made concerted attempts to ensure that its war art collection transmitted positive memories of the First World War in the planning of the memorial-like gallery that was meant to house it. And, as discussed in chapter two, the CWMF's emphasis on works of art that did not challenge safe, conventional perceptions of the front-line experience, again emphasised its role as a memorial. An analysis of how the CWMF exhibitions transmitted an aura of reverence and tribute still needs to be made. As I will demonstrate, the experience – the lived event of the CWMF exhibitions – like the art works and the planned gallery building, had the power to act as a memorial by presenting its audience with an idealised 'memory' of the Great War.[46] It did so via the locations chosen to host the exhibitions, the manner in which works were displayed, the way in which the displays were advertised, and the means by which souvenirs were sold to visitors.

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[45] Ibid.

The CWMF exhibitions toured a number of cities in Canada, as well as major centres in Britain and the United States following the end of the war. Of note are the cities that were chosen to host the collection and the order in which the display toured. The very first exhibition in early 1919 did not appear in Canada but was slated for London, to be hosted by that country's Royal Academy. Despite promotions that claimed the show would highlight the exploits of Canadian soldiers on the Western Front, the exhibition's opening, and the lavish ceremony that accompanied it were addressed to the British public. This fact points to a recognition on the part of Lord Beaverbrook and his committee that, as much as the CWMF was created to pay tribute to Canada, an equally important message that needed to be transmitted was that Canada had fought and would continue to fight to aid Britain as a strong and loyal part of her commonwealth.

The exhibition only arrived in Canada after a trip to New York for the second showing, at the Anderson Galleries in June of the same year. Paul Konody explained at the time that the exhibition celebrating Canada's achievement in the war was being brought to New York "as a tribute to the 10,000 or more brave American boys who enlisted in the Canadian forces. The memorial serves as much to honour their heroism and devotion as that of the Canadians who laid down their lives in the cause of freedom and justice."[47] In this statement, Konody highlighted the underlying role of the Fund's New York display as an exercise in cultural diplomacy – a gift offered to the Americans in an effort to build upon the wave of Canadian-American goodwill that had emerged since the United States had joined the war effort in 1917. The CWMF committee was celebrating what was generally seen as new age of co-operation and kinship that had evolved through the war experience, in which "the resources, the money, the manufacturing and transport facilities, and, to some extent, the manpower of the continent were as one for war purposes."[48]

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[46] Bruce Ferguson, "Exhibition Rhetorics: Material Speech and Utter Sense" in Reesa Greenberg, Bruce Ferguson, and Sandy Nairn, eds., *Thinking About Exhibitions* (London: Routledge, 1996), 175-6.

It was only in late summer of 1919 that the Fund's exhibition was finally brought home to Canada, yet the collection arrived, not in the nation's capital city, but in Toronto, one of the country's largest cities and the one possessing the most well-established Anglophone financial and cultural communities. It was in Toronto that Beaverbrook and his committee hoped their war art collection would see its greatest success by securing the largest audiences and financial backing, while avoiding competition with other national monuments already planned for Ottawa. Toronto was certainly an appropriate choice given that the city would have also been the centre of Canadian post-war patriotism. When the exhibition moved to Montréal in October 1919, however, its role as a memorial was at its most intense and was intermingled with its propagandising function. The CWMF display sought to appeal at once to Anglophones in Québec by presenting them with the same commemorative messages transmitted in other centres, while also seeking to appease the Francophone population by pointing to images of war that implied French/English-Canadian unity on the battlefields against a common German foe. Lieutenant-Colonel Parkinson, who had been Director of the Canadian War Records until 1919, wrote that by moving to Montréal, the Fund had been allowed to perform one last "valuable national service"[49] among French Canadians, who had proven particularly unsupportive of the war effort and continued to harbour resentment toward the federal government over the conscription issue.

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[47] Paul Konody quoted in Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War*, 87-8.

[48] Robert Brown and Ramsay Cook, *Canada 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1974), 279-80.

Equally as important as the location of each of the Fund's exhibitions was the way in which the CWMF collection was arranged in exhibition spaces and catalogues. I have already demonstrated in chapter two that modernist works of art in the collection were often segregated from the more conventional pieces, and were displayed and described in the catalogues as 'decorative works,' diminishing their role and their worth in the collection. The strategic arrangement of works in the Fund's exhibition rooms and its catalogues underlined the committee's desire that the displays serve as a memorial, and this desire is made especially clear in a description by Lord Rothermere of the ideal arrangement of the war art in its exhibition space. Rothermere believed that the visitor should be greeted by the group of forty large tribute pieces, along the walls of a central hall. The visitor would then pass into a series of exhibition spaces in which the placing of additional paintings and sculptures would be

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[49] Lt.-Col. Parkinson quoted in Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War*, 91.

> governed by the subject and manner of execution and varied methods of lighting and dramatic presentation will be provided, ensuring to each work its due effect. They will also be sufficiently separated by the architectural framing of the walls, so that the inherent diversity of technique and subject will not in any way be distracting to the spectator or react among the works themselves.[50]

Essentially, what Rothermere envisioned was an exhibition in which the war art pieces, particularly the more challenging works, would not to be seen alongside the preferred, traditional, paintings and prints. His ideal was a display in which the works would not be permitted to mix, to be shown in the same space, or to even be seen from the same vantage point. Since the modernist pieces tended to be those that were less likely to glorify the war and more likely to ask uncomfortable questions about death and destruction, their physical isolation would wordlessly transmit a message to viewers that these were not appropriate or valid means of venerating 'Canada's brave boys.'

In addition, only certain CWMF images were chosen to advertise the exhibitions and to be sold as souvenirs. The images that were selected for this purpose were overwhelmingly the conventional, idealising images most popular with Fund committee members and audiences, such as *Canada's Answer* by Norman Wilkinson (Figure 9), *The Second Battle of Ypres* (Figure 5) and *The Battle of Vimy Ridge* by Richard Jack, *The Flag* by John Byam Shaw (Figure 15), and Benjamin West's *The Death of Wolfe* (Figure 21). Not selected were those paintings that were more representative of the complete experience of life at the Front, such as Frederick Varley's *For What?* (Figure 24), and the paintings of Paul Nash (Figure 25). A notice in the 1919 commemorative volume of *Art and War* advertises the sale of popular reproductions from the exhibitions in forty-eight colour plates and nine half-tones. The advertisement claims that these prints serve as an "excellent record of the works of [CWMF] Painters and Sculptors," and should be seen as treasured mementos of Canada at war.[51] Yet the deliberate selection of conventional battle paintings speaks to the power that these images possessed when they were sold and marketed as 'documentary truth.' The paintings chosen stood as symbols of general impressions of a mythical war, especially in light of what we now know about the realities of trench warfare in France and Flanders from 1914 to 1918 – the slaughter of unprepared troops by machine gun and poison gas, the brutal emotional distress inflicted through months of attrition in horribly unsanitary conditions, and the intense alienation of soldiers on the front-lines from their largely naïve and uninformed families and friends.

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[50] Lord Rothermere, *The Housing of the Canadian War Memorials*, 14.

These features of the Canadian War Memorials Fund exhibition allowed it to be 'read' in certain ways – the selection of specific cities to host it, the calculated manner in which displays were put together, and the reproduction of selected images as souvenirs of the event – came together to construct a unique memorialising experience for viewers. The exhibitions, then, possessed much the same aura as conventional monuments because they sought to create and reaffirm positive collective memories of the war – not because they did not transmit any worthwhile messages to us about the history of the war, but because they transmitted that history in the form of national mythology. The CWMF's function as a commemorative exhibition helped to create a unique memory in Canada around the events of the First

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[51] Canadian War Records Office, *Canadian War Memorials Exhibition: Burlington House, Piccadilly – January & February1919* – exhibition catalogue (London: by the author, 1919, vi.

World War. The horror of trench warfare with its mud and death and endless deadlock was overshadowed by the impression of the war as an heroic struggle against a villainous enemy; a war in which courageous men could achieve glory in action and even in death.

The accomplishments of the Canadian War Memorials Fund displays, however, were short-lived. The exhibitions were a success immediately after the war, from 1919 until 1920 or so, but that success was very much dependant upon the timing and location of their appearances. An inherent problem with the Fund's displays, and perhaps with all such exhibitions, was its transience. It would seem, then, that Lord Beaverbrook and his committee were justified in their belief that the art work and exhibitions would not be enough to sustain the CWMF; without a permanent gallery in which the collection could be housed, a site that would lend the group of artworks the ability to better stand as a monument over time, the Fund was doomed to be overlooked and neglected.

Emotional Landscapes

While the CWMF war art exhibitions were touring Britain, Canada and the United States, they did, for a time, serve their memorialising purpose well. This success, however, did not translate into the construction of a permanent gallery building to house the Fund's collection. Given the number of conventional war memorial structures that were built from the end of the First World War until the mid 1930s – the period in which the CWMF collection was also touring – the reasons why the Fund was not able to secure permanent housing are worth examining.

This final discussion will investigate the kinds of memorial activities in Canada after the Great War that were successful, and the ways in which they were able to do for Canada what the Canadian War Memorials Fund, in the form of the art works it produced, the exhibitions it presented, and the gallery it imagined, could not. While Beaverbrook had demonstrated the energy and the abilities to assemble an exceptional collection of war art for Canada, other forms of memorial quickly came to be seen as more powerful means of commemorating the war than the CWMF. As Vance has argued, Canadians did not wish to dwell on thoughts of death, destruction and controversy. Rather, as an overview of the countless monuments and cenotaphs erected across the country suggests, sentiments of personal and patriotic pride which strengthened the myth of the war as an heroic and nation-building event were preferred by most Canadians and determined the character of monuments erected after the war.

Efforts to create large-scale memorial projects abounded after the Armistice and throughout the 1920s. At the Canadian National Exhibition in the summer of 1919, the best-attended pavilion, attracting over 200,000 people in ten days, was a war trophy display billed by the *Toronto Star* as "living evidence of Canadian valour in France and Flanders."[52] Many of these artifacts, particularly large guns, were even incorporated into the designs of memorials that emerged in numerous cities and towns. Also active after the war was the Canadian branch of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, which took on the task in 1917 of building and maintaining cemeteries in the former battle zones. In addition, the Canadian Battlefield

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[52] August 16, 1919 *Toronto Star* quoted in Jonathan Vance, *Death So Noble*, 202.

Memorials Commission was established in 1920 with the purpose of marking the war's most famous battlefields and consecrating ground for Canadians in Europe. The CBMC, acting upon the recommendation of a committee of senior officers, chose eight sites, including St. Julien, the site of the Second Battle of Ypres, and Hill 145, the site of the Battle of Vimy Ridge, and then selected designs for appropriate grand memorial structures to be built in these locations.[53]

Other prominent examples of Canadian monuments built after the First World War, both for their size and impact, are the *Great Response* monument, the Peace Tower, and the Vimy Ridge Memorial. Also called simply the National War Memorial, the *Great Response* located in Ottawa's Confederation Square, was unveiled by King George VI on the morning of May 21st, 1939 to a huge crowd (Figure 26). The Peace Tower, part of Parliament's Centre Block, was completed in 1927 and was described in the *Royal Architectural Institute of Canada Journal* as "a glorious monument erected as a memorial to those gallant fellows who passed on during the Great War"[54] (Figure 27).

The most striking example of a Canadian monument to the Great War, and an interesting comparison to the Canadian War Memorials Fund project, is the Vimy Memorial, whose unique characteristics helped to guarantee its success in the inter-war years and beyond. The structure was designed by Canadian sculptor and architect Walter Allward. Construction began in 1925 and eleven years and 1.5 million dollars later, on July 26, 1936, it was unveiled by King Edward VIII in the presence of the French president and a crowd of 100,000 Canadian and French veterans and their families.[55] There are a number of features of the Vimy Memorial that make it distinct from any other Canadian monument to the First World War, and that subsequently highlight its ability to appeal to Canadians when a project such as the CWMF could not sustain the same kind of public and government support: its location, its size, and certain distinctive features of its style.

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[53] Jonathan Vance, *Death So Noble*, 66.

[54] B. Evan Parry, "Canada's Peace Tower and Memorial Chamber," *Royal Architectural Institute of Canada Journal* 13 (January 1936): 11.

In regards to the location of the Vimy Memorial, the structure boasts something no other Canadian monument can – it stands on the very site that romantic histories have described as the birthplace of Canada as a nation. Constructed on a site donated by the French government to the Canadian people, the Vimy Memorial stands on Hill 145, overlooking the Canadian battlefield of 1917 (Figure 28). To this day, the grounds maintain their intimate relationship with the battles fought there, and hundreds of metres of interconnected tunnels are still visible, closed off for public safety. The structure is also surrounded by more than thirty cemeteries, all within a few kilometers.[56]

The memorial is the largest Great War monument dedicated to Canadians. The structure itself is immense, consisting of two huge pylons which soar 226 feet from a 40,000 square foot platform set on the site's highest point. The architect is said to have conceived of the design from a dream, and the theatrical temple structure certainly suggests a dream-like quality.[57] The site of the memorial is expansive: the monument and its surrounding grounds take up 250 acres of land and create a vast silent landscape in the middle of the French countryside. The location is appropriately termed a "battlefield park" by the official Canadian government Veterans' Affairs website, and was declared a Canadian National Historic Site in 1997.[58] Unlike the majority of traditional war memorials built between the two world wars, the Vimy Memorial did not merely situate itself within a town square or community park – it created an entire atmosphere of commemoration, not merely presenting visitors with a structure to view, but enveloping them in an immense memorial environment. The trend after the Armistice to build this and many other large-scale monuments speaks to the need in Canada to construct what were essentially emotional landscapes. These grand sculptures and structures, often surrounded by large tracts of parkland or cemeteries, such as the sites designated by the CWGC and CBMC, and the vast landscape of the Vimy Memorial, were acknowledged to transmit a powerful atmosphere of reverence, even holiness, to visitors.

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[55] Veterans Affairs Canada website http://www.vac-acc.gc.ca; accessed 26 January 2005.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Jeffrey Keshen, *Propaganda and Censorship During Canada's Great War* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1996, 194.

In addition to its symbolic location, the Vimy Memorial features a number of large figures carved in stone, placed around the two main pylons, the latter representing the nations of Canada and France, united in a common purpose of fighting a war to bring about eventual peace and freedom for the Allies. Two of the figures are mourners, in classical reclining poses, while the remainder represent, among others, Canada, Justice, Truth, Peace, Gallantry, Knowledge and Sympathy (Figure 28). In the centre, at the base, the Spirit of Sacrifice throws the torch to his comrades.[59] These figures, metaphors for victory and pride, so common on Great War monuments, romanticised the nation's remembrance of those who had, through their 'heroic sacrifice' and 'saintly deaths,' saved democracy and created a nation in the process. By and large, Canadian monuments do not feature figures or objects that clearly refer to death, such as corpses, bones or skulls. Instead, as seen on the Vimy monument, the use of classical symbols such as broken columns or the presence of angels or allegorical figures was common[60] (Figure 29). This practice points to a pervasive denial of death which provided a means by which monuments such as the one at Vimy Ridge imprinted an inspiring remembrance of the war on spectators.

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[58] Veterans Affairs Canada website http://www.vac-acc.gc.ca; accessed 26 January 2005.

The monument at Vimy also reflects the general ability of First World War memorials to stand as substitute tombs. Inscribed on the ramparts of the Vimy Memorial are the names of 11,285 Canadian soldiers who were posted 'missing, presumed dead' in France.[61] Like gravestones, names of the dead inscribed on cenotaphs created an incredibly strong link to the particular identities of the departed. Whatever the style of a particular memorial structure or commemorative plaque, these names more than anything else solidified the status of monuments as places of mourning, inscribing them with the seemingly spiritual essence of the dead. As Daniel Sherman notes, "even today those long…lists, strangely echoed by the silence that usually surrounds them, cannot fail to move us."[62]

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[59] Ibid.

[60] Glenn Wilkinson, "Literary Images of Vicarious Warfare: British Newspapers and the Origin of the First World War, 1899-1914" in Patrick Quinn and Steven Trout, eds., *The Literature of the Great War Reconsidered: Beyond Modern Memory* (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2001), 32.

[61] Veterans Affairs Canada website http://www.vac-acc.gc.ca; accessed 26 January 2005.

[62] Daniel Sherman, "Art, Commerce, and the Production of Memory in France after World War I" in John Gillis, ed., *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 206-7.

But the listing of the names of the dead on memorials such as the one at Vimy was not calculated to raise in the minds of viewers images of the ways that soldiers killed or were killed. The private act of remembering is here transformed into memorialising by depriving death of its pain, its hopelessness, and by imbuing it with the qualities of meaningful heroic sacrifice. War memorials in Canada almost never referred to the dead as having *lost* their lives. Loss suggested a haphazard event, something that occurred by chance, and so did not accurately describe death in battle as Canadians in 1919 wanted to understand it. As Jonathan Vance describes, the fallen were believed, rather, to have *given* their lives: "There is a sense of purpose inherent in this notion that affirmed the war as a meaningful event and its participants as willing actors. To lose one's life was a tragedy; to give one's life by making the supreme sacrifice was the ultimate in selflessness."[63]

The draw of large memorials and expansive commemorative sites in the years following the war is clear – they transmitted tangible messages to Canadians about tribute and commemoration. They were not designed to offer a corrective or to ask questions or to raise doubt. Though they often seem today to be sentimental or melodramatic, they were erected by their communities to console, to exemplify heroism, to offer peace of mind, and of course, to remember.[64] But this commemorative function was strategic; sentiments of grief and deep loss were expressed but not emphasised, and citizens were urged to transform their sadness into pride and gratitude.

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[63] Jonathan Vance, *Death So Noble*, 51.

[64] Robert Shipley, *To Mark Our Place: A History of Canadian War Memorials*, with a foreword by Pierre Berton (Toronto: New Canada Press Limited, 1987), 111.

Numerous pieces in the CWMF's collection of art shared much in common with the large memorial structures built in the interwar years. The large, emotion-driven monuments built in Canada after the war reflected a memorialising purpose that was comparable to that of the popular sentimental pieces like John Byam Shaw's *The Flag*, allegorical works like *Sacrifice* by Charles Sims (Figure 16), and idealised depictions of battle like the paintings of Richard Jack and countless others. Like these works, monuments to the war were easily readable because the forms they took and the messages they conveyed have been used over and over again for centuries – they were able to communicate their message by their form alone. This seemingly instinctive understanding of the meaning of traditional war memorials is the result of the repeated use of the same monument forms throughout history: menhir, pyramid, cairn, sarcophagus, crucifix – all wordlessly convey popular feelings of pride, of reverence, and of faith.[65] Monuments were able to communicate a reverent, respectful, and thoughtful mood not only because the forms they take have remained unchanged for centuries, but because they have consistently been used for the same things. They have either been tombs or grave markers, commemorations of great people or celebrations of important historical events, and through this consistent repetition have themselves become a kind of language.[66] But this easy readability was not present in some of the Fund's commissions. Some required interpretation and explanation. Works such as William Roberts' *The First German Gas Attack at Ypres* (Figure 7) and Paul Nash's *Void* (Figure 25), though not by any means comprising the majority of the Fund's collection, posed great difficulties for audiences because they contained no memorialising qualities that allowed the average viewer accessibility.

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[65] Ibid., 104-5.
[66] Ibid., 107.

As the success of the exhibitions demonstrated, the CWMF artworks did fill a need – a hunger after the war for all things war-related, a desire to acknowledge and commemorate the sacrifices that had been made by Canada and her soldiers, but this ability to give Canadians what they were looking for was short-lived. A gallery could, conceivably, have been the means by which the Canadian War Memorials collection could have held its place in the Canadian public's consciousness. A permanent war art gallery might have resolved some of the tensions inherent in the CWMF project, by reinforcing the memorial function of the art works, especially as the actual experience of the war grew more distant. But the gallery was not to be. The CWMF's proposed building suffered funding troubles and interference from NGC officials, but more importantly, it failed because the works of war art it would have housed appeared inadequate to Canadians for the purposes of memorialising, especially in light of other commemorative objects and structures being produced.

In the introduction to Beaverbrook's 1916 book *Canada in Flanders*, then Prime Minister Robert Borden wrote of his wish that "[i]n the years to come it will be the duty and the pride of Canada to rear, both in this Dominion and beyond the ocean, monuments which will worthily commemorate the glorious deeds of her sons who offered the supreme sacrifice for liberty and civilization."[67] Beaverbrook's war art project was planned with this very goal in mind; that of taking its place as a recognised memorial to Canada in the Great War. Without a permanent space in which to be housed, however, and in light of the ease with which conventional monuments spoke to the Canadian public, the Canadian War Memorials Fund could not inspire the kind of admiration and interest afforded to these other commemorative landscapes; it was doomed to remain only an idea.

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[67] Sir Robert Borden in Lord Beaverbrook, *Canada in Flanders: The Official Story of the Canadian Expeditionary Force – Volume I*, 3rd ed. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1916), xi.

Conclusion

Michèle Barrett, in an article published in 2000 entitled "The Great War and Post-Modern Memory" has written that

> [t]he 1914-1918 war posed the problem of loss and grief on a huge personal scale; it generated a powerful sense of critical anger at the waste of human life. The aesthetic question was how to find a language, how to find a form, in which both personal loss and a more social or cultural anger can be expressed. Traditional aesthetic conventions of realism and naturalism could be used to express the personal grief perhaps, but not the social and political bitterness. The new modernist conventions, moving towards abstraction rather than figuration, could address the collective perhaps; they were not so powerful in terms of the human, personal loss.[1]

Barrett speaks here of the problem in inter-war Canada and certainly in other nations, of attempting to come to terms with a period so unlike anything that had come before, one that proved incredibly skillful at creating a myth about itself in order to conceal its frightening actualities.

Unlike countries such as Britain and Germany, whose modernist cultural movements expanded dramatically after the First World War, the persistence in Canada of what Paul Fusell has called the 'High Diction discourse' is extraordinary. The period after the Armistice was seen as a time to celebrate the triumph of right and of democracy, rather than to promote peace and to question the reasons why so many nations had been drawn into the conflict. The desire to mark the 'birth of Canada' and to recall only positive aspects of the war experience infused nearly ever aspect of the life of Canadians during and after the war: government policy, censorship laws, propaganda and recruiting efforts, military training, war reportage and history writing, as well as the making of art and monuments.

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[1] Michèle Barrett, "The Great War and Post-Modern Memory," *New Formations* 41 (Autumn 2000): 140.

The Canadian War Memorials Fund scheme under Lord Beaverbrook's guidance contributed to the maintenance of positive ways of thinking about and remembering the Great War. The Fund as a whole, as well as its art, its exhibitions and its gallery taken separately, were tools, organised to send a particular message to those who participated in it and to those who viewed it. While scholars such as Maria Tippett have argued that the Fund greatly impacted Canadians by introducing them to modernism and showing them reliable documents of life at the Front, a careful consideration of the fund's history, its exhibitions, and the fate of its building reveals that Canadians wanted to memorialise, not by way of the CWMF, but through a familiar language of heroism and reverence. The depiction of the horrors of war was beyond the artistic and emotional comprehension of most Canadians after the Armistice.

However, while the majority of Canadian memorials to the war, the CWMF collection, exhibitions and proposed grand gallery included, can be criticised for their often unabashed manipulation of popular sentiment, they are products of their time. Artist A. Y. Jackson wrote in an article in *The Lamps* magazine at the end of the war that "while one might criticize the general [CWMF] scheme, the prominence given to subjects of little importance, the lack of continuity as an historical event, and the divergent tendencies among the artists," it is worth remembering that the project "evolved at a strenuous period of the war after Vimy and before Passchendaele." The

Fund's committee, he reminds us, had to contend with the neglect of government officials and the changing commitments of the Canadian people.[2]

There is certainly something to be said for the fact that the CWMF project was repeated during the Second World War, under the title of the Canadian War Records. This subsequent programme, also created with the intent to record the activities of Canadians at war, received official support during the winter of 1942-43. This time, every painter involved in the programme was a Canadian, more freedom was given to its modernist artists, and its more structured system divided the commissioned artists equally amongst the army, navy and air force. The sum of the CWR's labours is almost six thousand oils, watercolours, drawings and bronzes marking an extensive visual study of the war.[3] In 1946, all the official art produced under this second war art scheme was turned over to the National Gallery on much the same terms as the Canadian War Memorials had been.[4]

The willingness shown by Canada's federal government to replicate the CWMF project nearly a quarter of a century later serves to demonstrate that the Fund did have an impact, though its true weight is difficult to measure. It is possible that with the construction of a grand gallery in Ottawa to permanently house the war art collection, Beaverbrook's project would have continued to exist in the consciousness of the Canadian public. Perhaps such a building could have given Canadians in the inter-war years the kind of memorialising setting that other monuments were so effortlessly able to provide.

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[2] A. Y. Jackson, "The War Memorials: A Challenge," *Lamps* (December 1919): 75.

[3] Heather Robertson, *A Terrible Beauty: The Art of Canada at War* – exhibition catalogue (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1977), 14-15.

[4] R. F. Wodehouse, *Aviation Paintings – From the Collection of the Canadian War Museum* – exhibition catalogue, with a foreword by William E. Taylor, Jr. (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1972), 7.

In order to consider this possible scenario, it is perhaps useful to look at the example of a similar war art collection that, much like the CWMF, did not succeed in gaining a permanent display space after the First World War: the Official War Artists' Scheme under the auspices of the British Pictorial Propaganda Committee. Like the Canadian War Memorials Fund, the British project hired numerous artists to produce a group of works that by 1919 comprised twelve-hundred pieces. A special Hall of Remembrance was planned to display the collection in perpetuity, but was never built, and, like the CWMF art which was eventually transferred to the National Gallery and the National War Museum, the British war art was handed over to that country's Imperial War Museum not long after the close of the war.

Michèle Barrett describes an exhibition of a portion of the British war art collection, held in 1998, entitled *The First World War Remembered*. The paintings were exhibited along with photographs, films, audio recordings, war poems and trophies. As well, personal items such as hand-written letters, telegrams, and drawings made by soldiers in the trenches for their children, were on display. Barrett describes how these more personal items succeeded in capturing the attention of visitors to the exhibition: "People leaned on these cabinets for long periods, reading every word rather than glancing at them and moving on. Many people had tears in their eyes."[5] The rooms above, which displayed the war paintings, on the other hand, remained empty. Unlike the CWMF, the art collection produced by the British First

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[5] Michèle Barrett, "The Great War and Post-Modern Memory," 140.

World War art project included many avant-garde pieces, very often reflecting angry, bitter reactions to the war. Yet the British and Canadian publics seem to have been of the same opinion when it came to choosing which objects, the works of art or the trophies and mementos, created and maintained the kinds of memories of the Great War that they preferred. As Barrett concludes, unlike the trophies and trinkets, the works of art at the Imperial War Museum exhibition

> are powerful but they make you *think* rather than *weep*. The difference between these art galleries and the highly personal exhibition downstairs is also an important difference in the interpretation of the cultural history, and contemporary legacy, of the Great War.[6]

By not prominently displaying the war art in the Canadian War Memorials Fund collection, then, we have missed an opportunity. But perhaps this missed chance does not concern memorialising our past; the failure of the CWMF collection is not to be mourned because it has lost its power to show us an idealised version of the Great War. What has been overlooked is the ability of this war art collection to serve as a document of the many conflicting interests, concerns and points of view of the country, its people and its soldiers from 1914 to1919, and into the inter-war years. The works produced under the Fund's guidance are, therefore, valuable as historical documents, but less as records of the war and more as records of the time that produced them. While it was the wish of Lord Beaverbrook and his committee that these paintings, prints, sketches and sculptures stand as faithful documents of life at war, they serve better, as my thesis suggests, to reflect the political, financial and social decisions that were made in the process of bringing them into being. The formation of collective remembrance is a complex process, the bringing together of innumerable private visions and experiences. Surely an entire nation's memory and knowledge of an event as significant as the First World War would not be complete if it did not represent all facets of that vision.

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[6] Ibid., 138.

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Illustrations

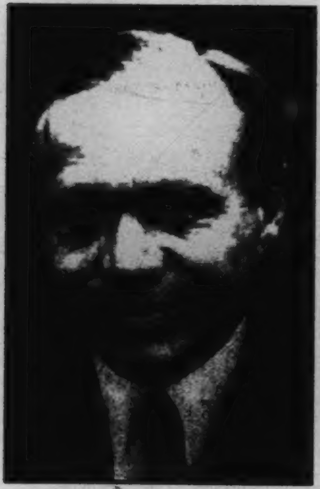

Figure 1. Photograph of Lord Beaverbrook.

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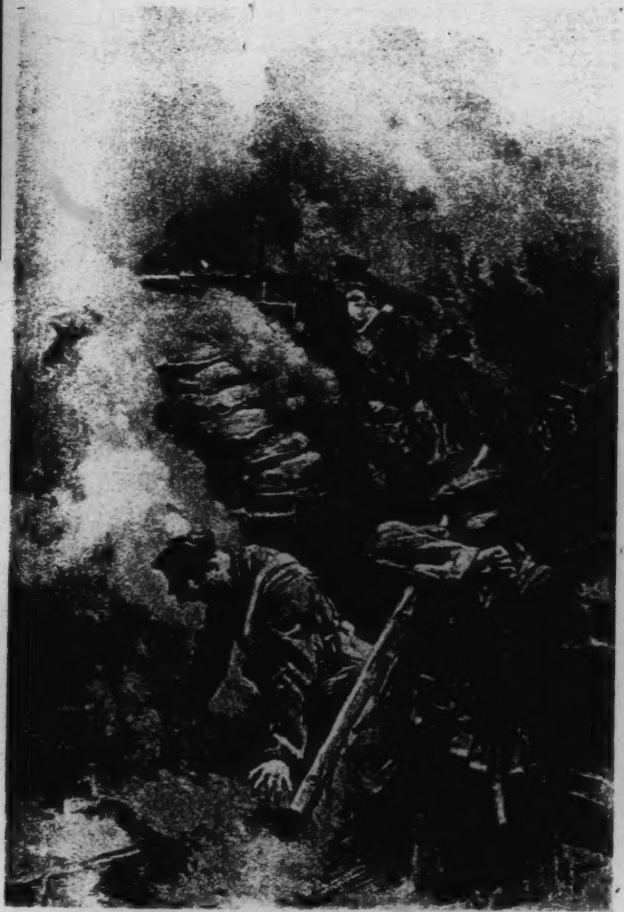

Figure 2. An example of the artistic reconstructions Aitken commissioned to illustrate his book *Canada in Flanders*. Artist, title and date unknown.

Reprinted from Lord Beaverbrook, *Canada in Flanders: The Official Story of the Canadian Expeditionary Force – Volume I,* 3rd ed., with an introduction by Rt.-Hon. Sir Robert Borden (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1916), preface.

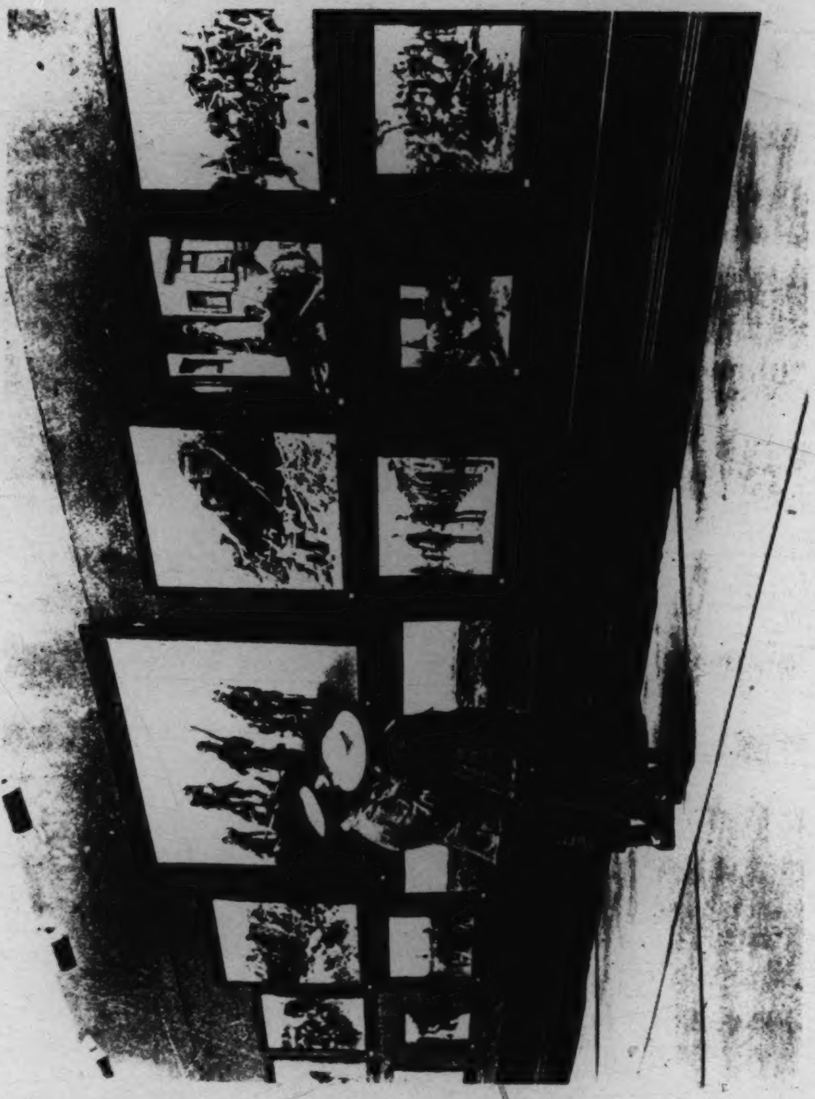

Figure 3. Visitors to the Canadian War Records Office's first exhibition of war photographs, 1916. A number of CWRO official photographer Ivor Castle's photographs, for instance, depicting the CEF at the front in 1916, were, as fellow CWRO photographer William Rider-Rider later confirmed, " 'made', or rather pieced together, from [photographs of] shell bursts taken at a British trench-mortar school outside St. Pol [Belgium], and…taken at rehearsal attacks of men going over the top with canvas breech covers on rifles." William Rider-Rider quoted in Peter Robertson,

"Canadian Photojournalism during the First World War," *History of Photography* 2, no. 1 (January 1978): 43. One of Castle's *Over the Top* images is visible top, fourth from the right. Many of his images from this series are still used to illustrate the CEF at the Front.

Reprinted from Peter Robertson, "Canadian Photojournalism during the First World War," *History of Photography* 2, no. 1 (January 1978): 39.

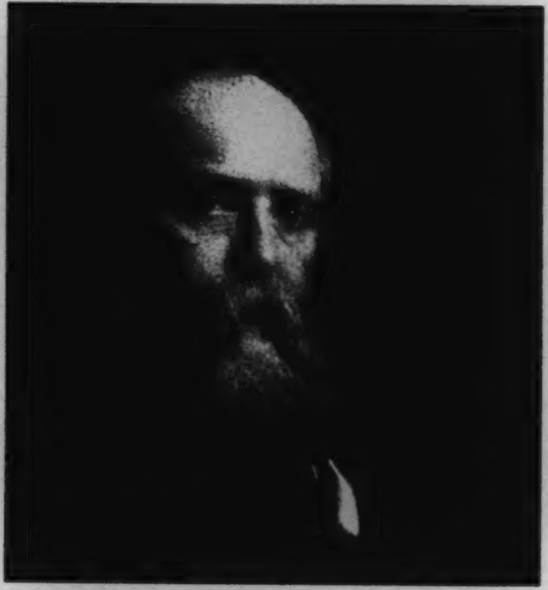

Figure 4. Photograph of Sir Edmund Walker.

Reprinted from Laura Brandon and Dean Oliver, *Canvas of War: Painting the Canadian Experience, 1914-1945*, with a foreword by Jack Granatstein (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2000), 61.

Figure 5.
Richard Jack,
The Second Battle of Ypres, 22 April to 25 May 1915,
1917.

Reprinted from Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War: Canada, Art, and the Great War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), plate 1.

Figure 6. William Orpen, *Portrait of Major-General Sir David Watson*, 1917-18.

Reprinted from Art of the First World War website http://www.art-ww1.com/gb/index2.html.

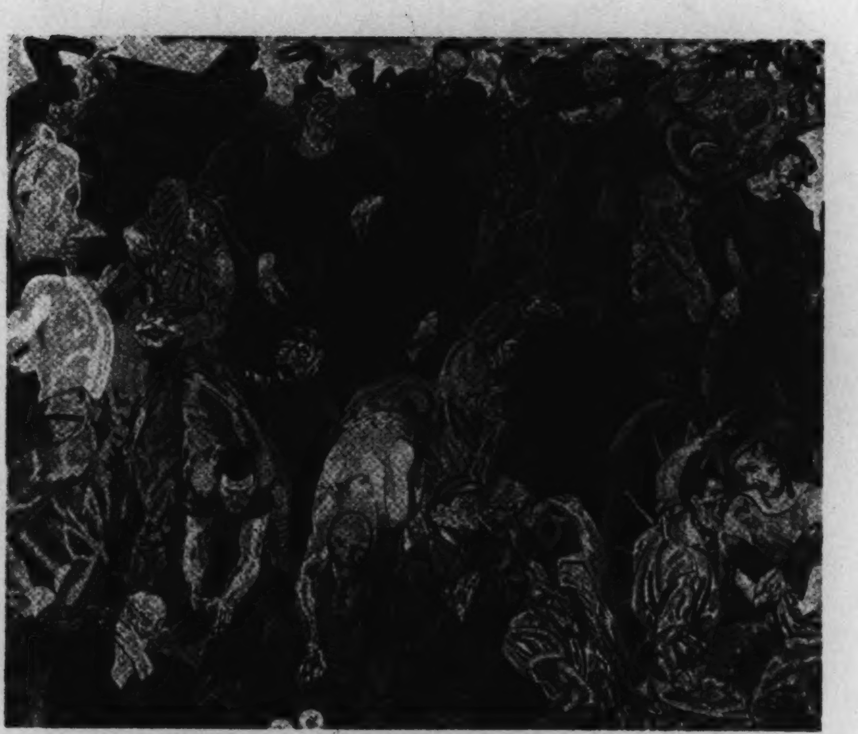

Figure 7. William Roberts, *The First German Gas Attack at Ypres*, 1918.

Reprinted from Canadian War Records Office, *Art and War: Canadian War Memorials*, with an article by P.G. Konody (London: Colour Magazine Ltd., 1919), plate 17.

Figure 8. Canadian War Records Office, front covers of two issues of *Canada in Khaki*.

Reprinted from Art of the First World War website http://www.art-ww1.com/gb/index2.html.

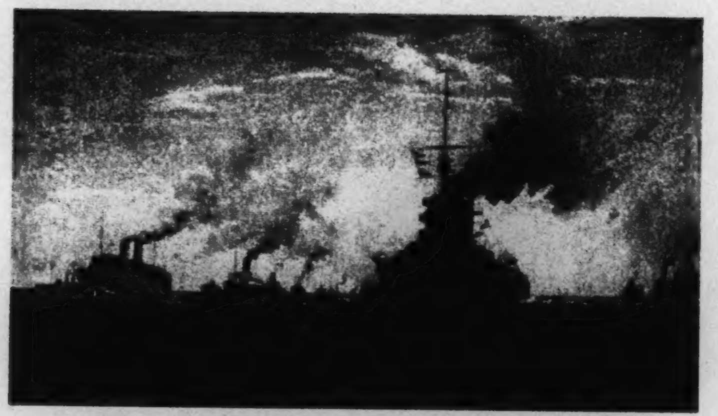

Figure 9. Norman Wilkinson, *Canada's Answer*, c. 1918.

Reprinted from Canadian War Museum website http://www.warmuseum.ca.

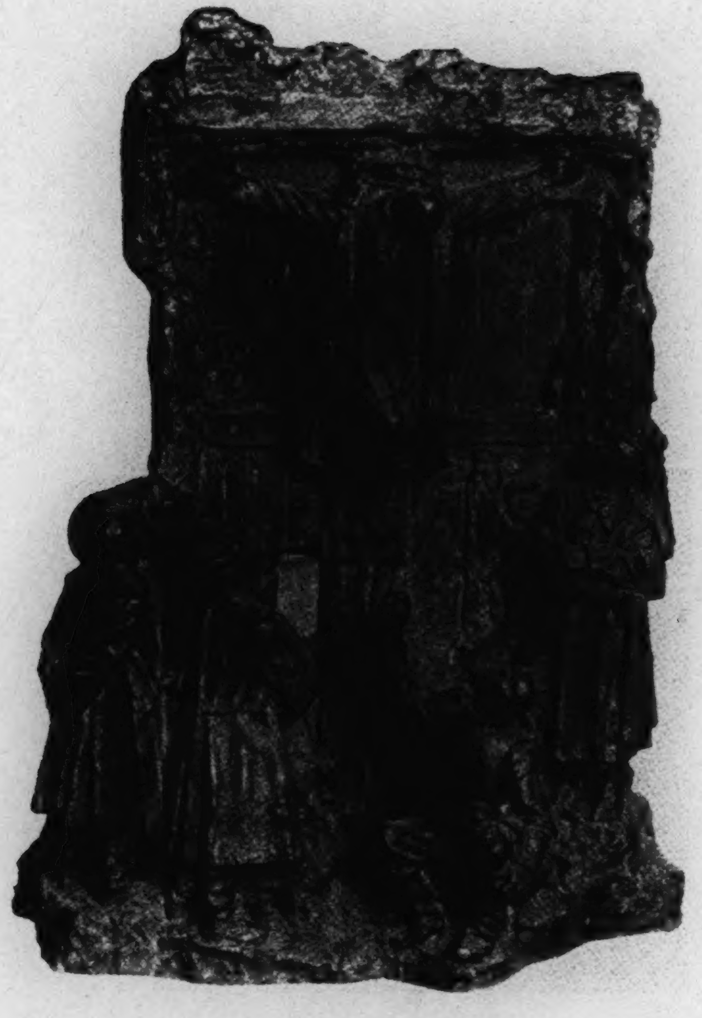

Figure 10. Derwent Wood, *Canada's Golgotha*, c. 1919.

Reprinted from Great War Family Research website http://1914-1918.org.

Figure 11. Alfred Munnings, *Charge of Flowerdew's Squadron*, c. 1918.

Reprinted from Canadian War Museum website http://www.warmuseum.ca.

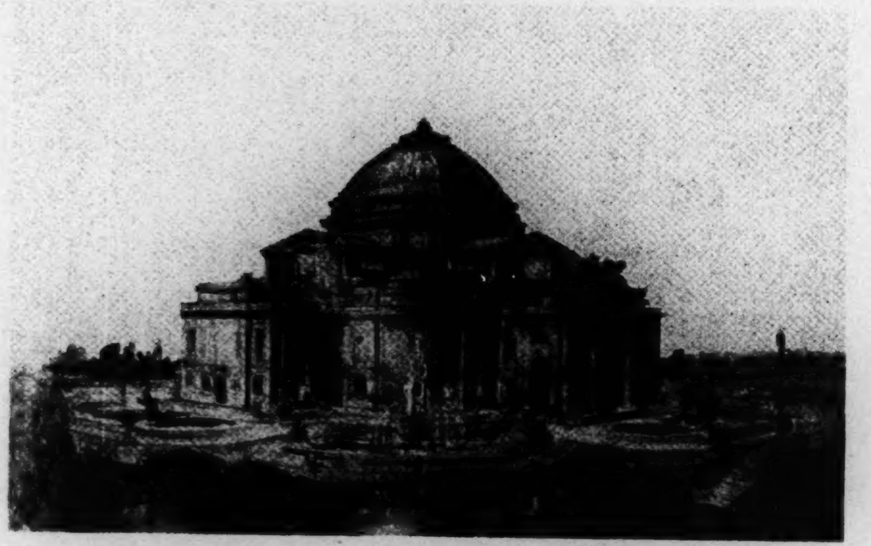

Figure 12. E. A. Rickards, front exterior elevation of the planned Canadian War Memorials Fund gallery building, c. 1918.

Reprinted from Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War: Canada, Art, and the Great War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), plate 48.

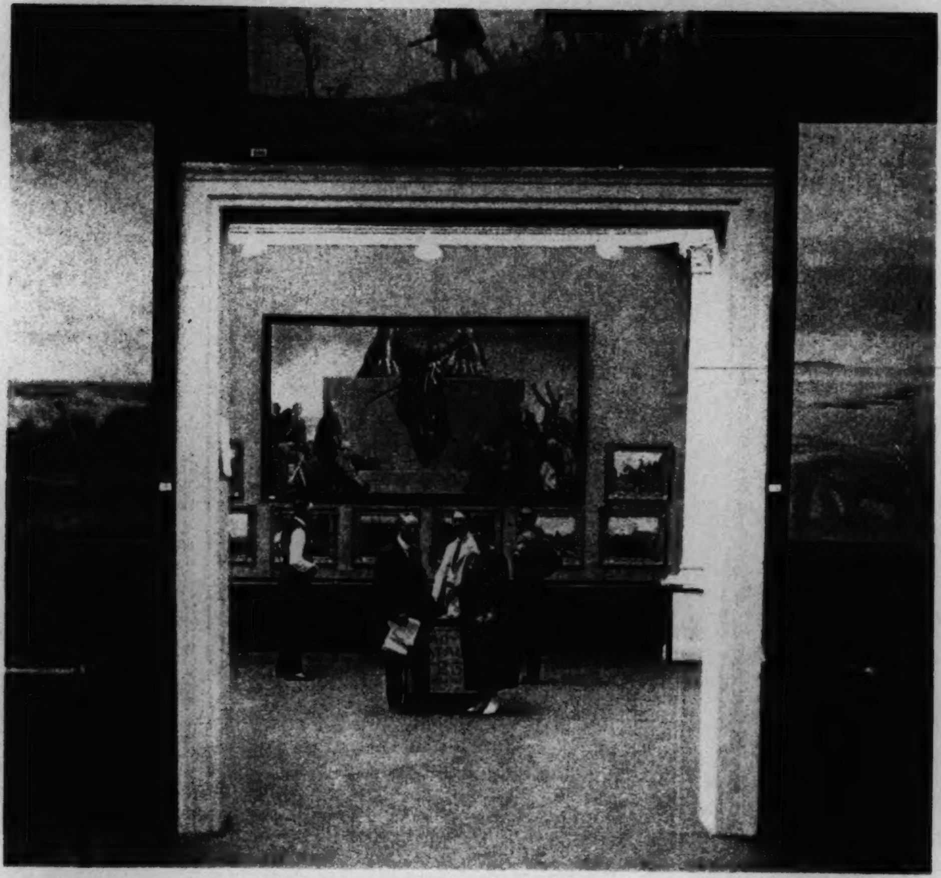

Figure 13. View of the Canadian War Memorials Fund exhibition at the CNE in Toronto in September, 1919.

Reprinted from Laura Brandon and Dean Oliver, *Canvas of War: Painting the Canadian Experience, 1914-1945*, with a foreword by Jack Granatstein (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2000), 56.

(a)

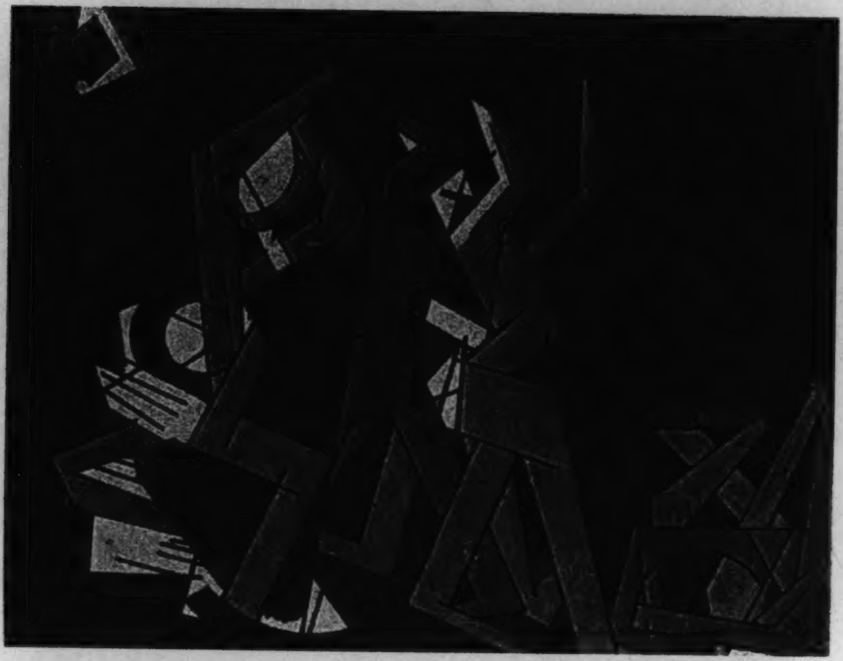

Figure 14. David Bomberg, *Sappers at Work*, 1917-19. Shown above (a) is the original painting. *Following page*, (b) a preliminary sketch for the re-worked canvas, and (c) the final painting accepted by the CWMF.

Reprinted from Art of the First World War website http://www.art-ww1.com/gb/index2.html.

(b)

(c)

Figure 15. John Byam Liston Shaw, *The Flag*, c. 1918.

Reprinted from Canadian War Records Office, *Art and War: Canadian War Memorials*, with an article by P.G. Konody (London: Colour Magazine Ltd., 1919), plate 1.

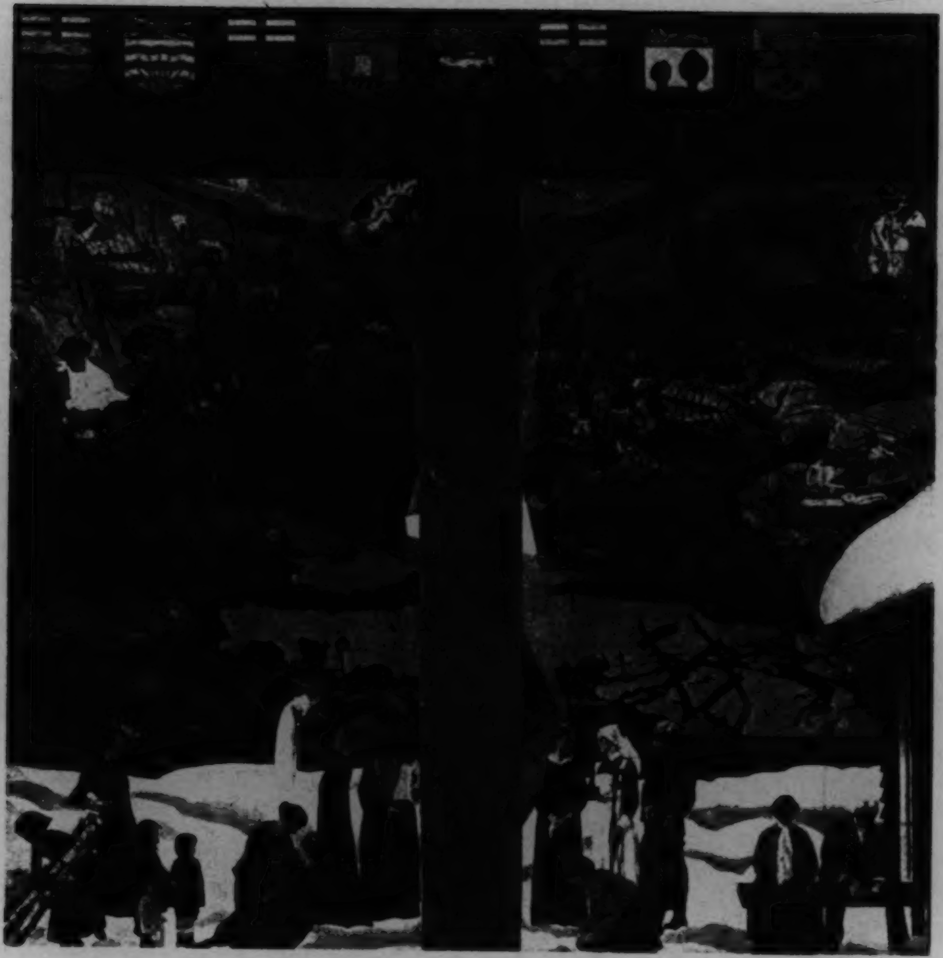

Figure 16. Charles Sims, *Sacrifice*, c. 1918.

Reprinted from Canadian War Museum website http://www.warmuseum.ca.

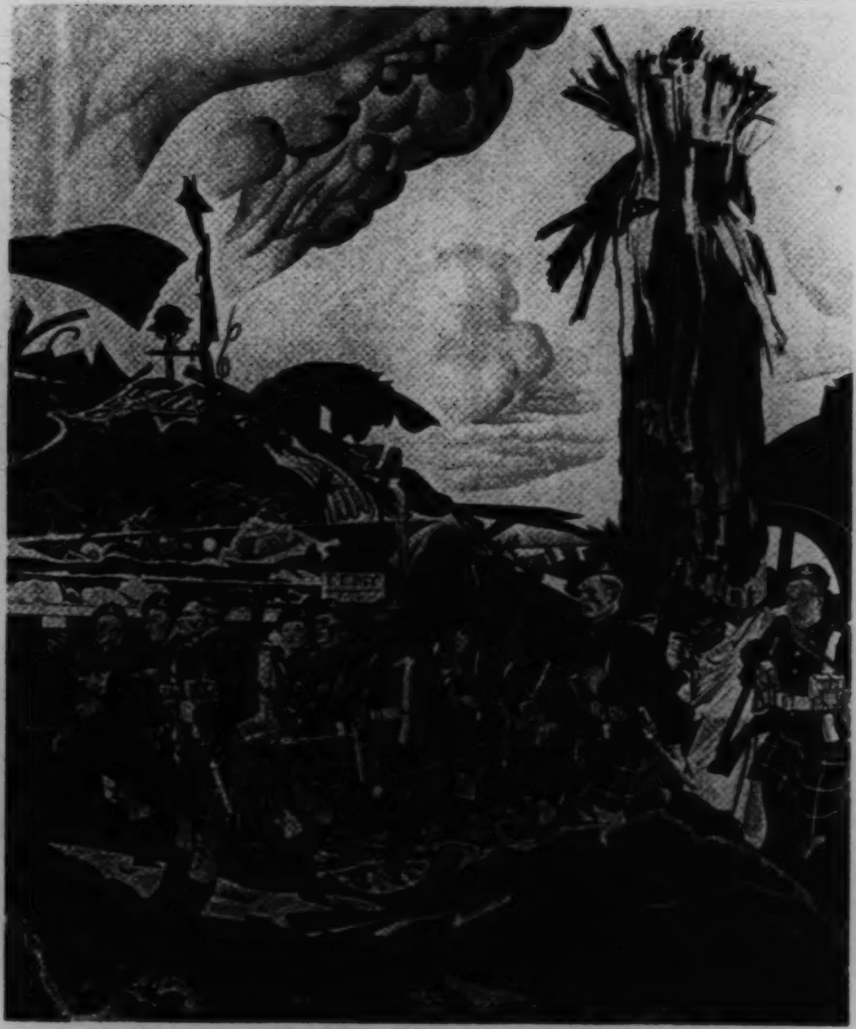

Figure 17. Eric Kennington, *The Conquerors* (formerly *The Victims*), 1920.

Reprinted from Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War: Canada, Art, and the Great War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), plate 23.

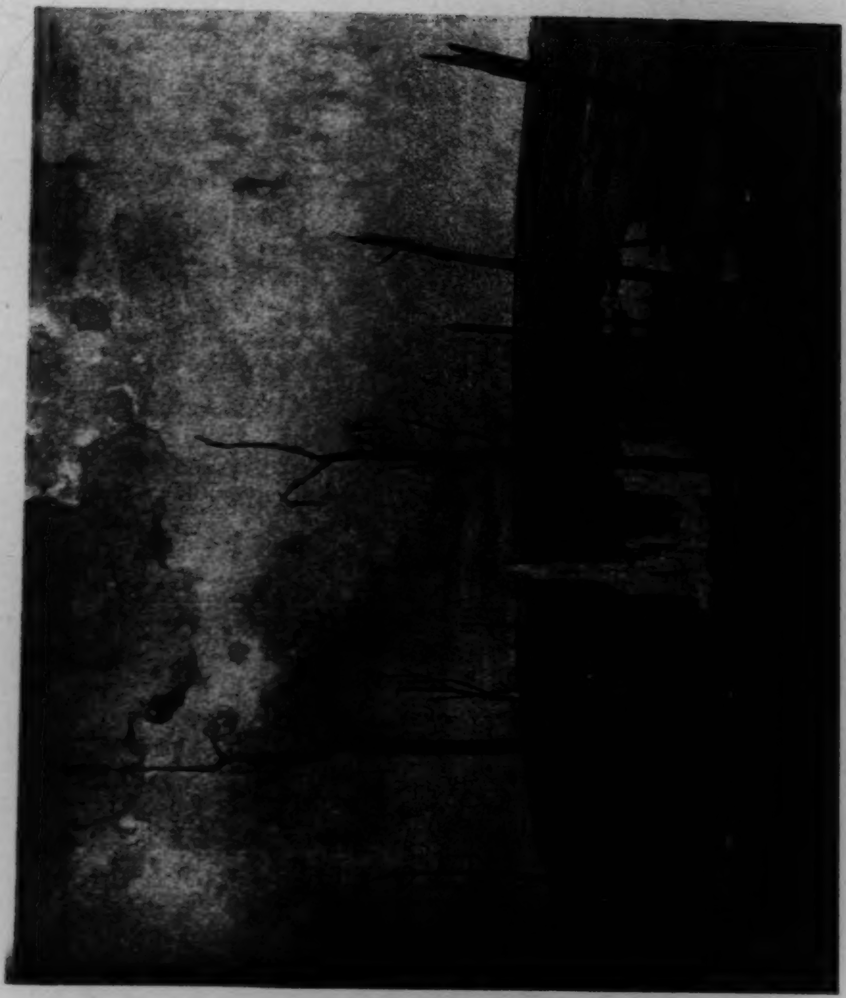

Figure 18. William Beatty, *Ablain-St. Nazaire*, 1918.

Reprinted from Canadian War Museum website http://www.warmuseum.ca.

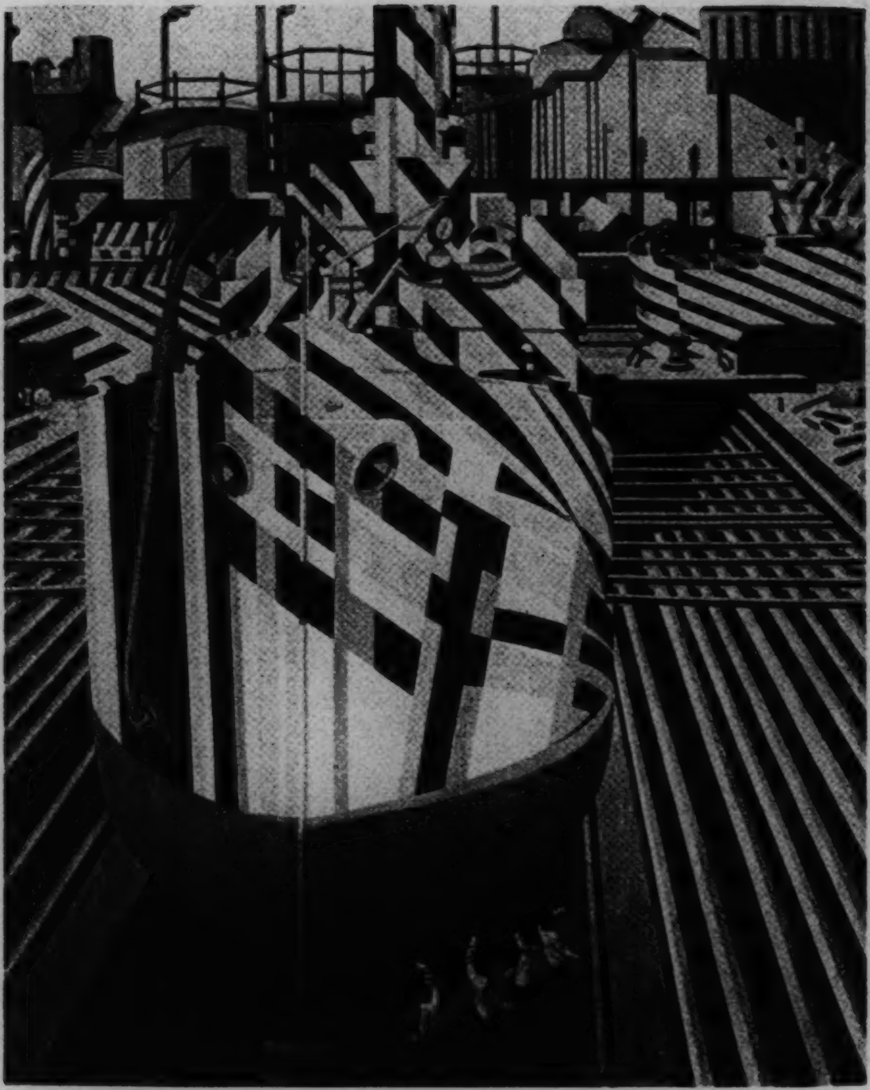

Figure 19. Edward Wadsworth, *Dazzle-Ships in Drydock at Liverpool*, c. 1918.

Reprinted from Maria Tppett, *Art at the Service of War: Canada, Art, and the Great War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), plate 41.

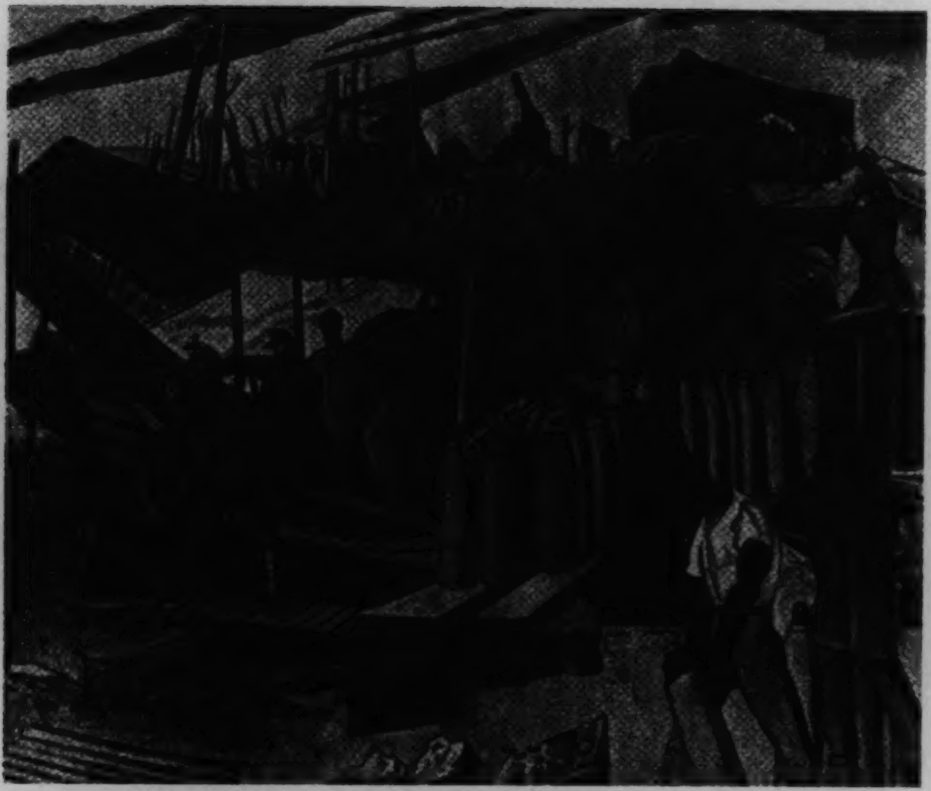

Figure 20. Percy Wyndham Lewis, *A Canadian Gunpit*, 1918.

Reprinted from Canadian War Records Office, *Art and War: Canadian War Memorials*, with an article by P.G. Konody (London: Colour Magazine Ltd., 1919), plate 43.

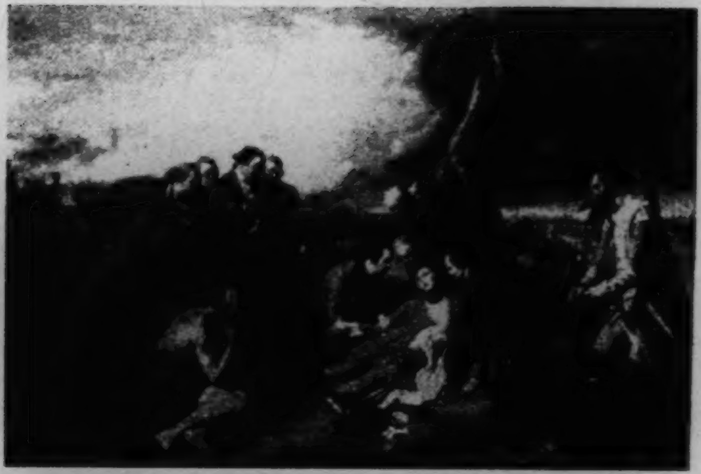

Figure 21. Sir Benjamin West, *Death of Wolfe*, 1771.

Reprinted from Canadian War Records Office, *Art and War: Canadian War Memorials*, with an article by P.G. Konody (London: Colour Magazine Ltd., 1919), plate 47.

Figure 22. James Kerr-Lawson, *The Cloth Hall, Ypres*, c. 1918.

Reprinted from Art of the First World War website http://www.art-ww1.com/gb/index2.html.

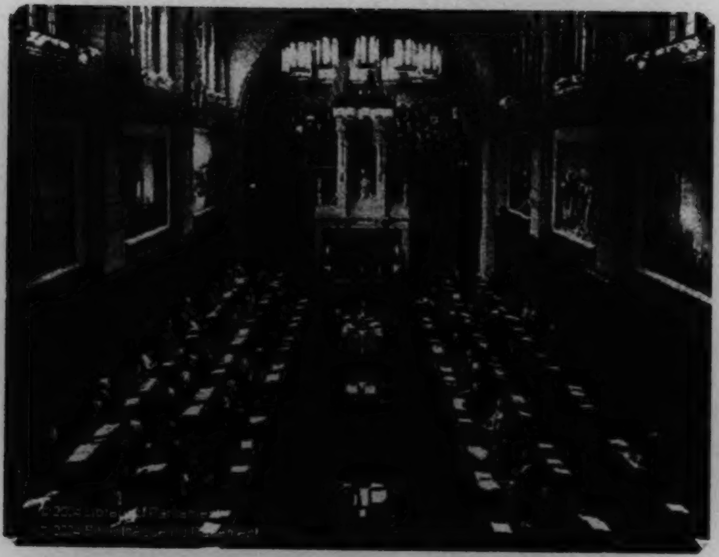
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Figure 23. Photograph of Parliament's Senate chamber, taken from the gallery above, showing six of the eight CWMF paintings hanging on the side walls.

Reprinted from Government of Canada Digital Collections website http://collections.ic.gc.ca.

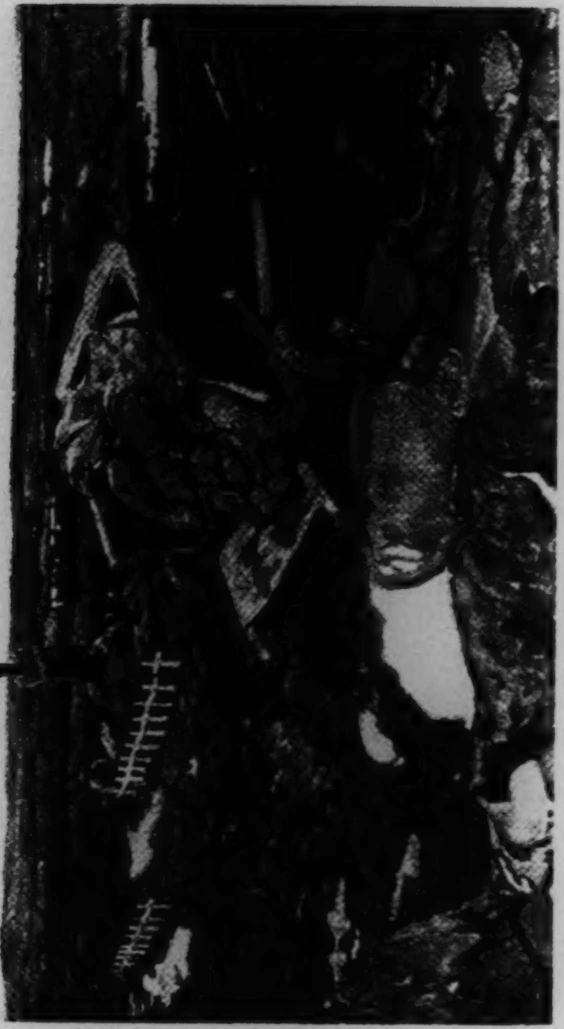


Figure 24. Frederick Varley, *For What?*, c. 1918.

Reprinted from Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War: Canada, Art, and the Great War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), plate 19.

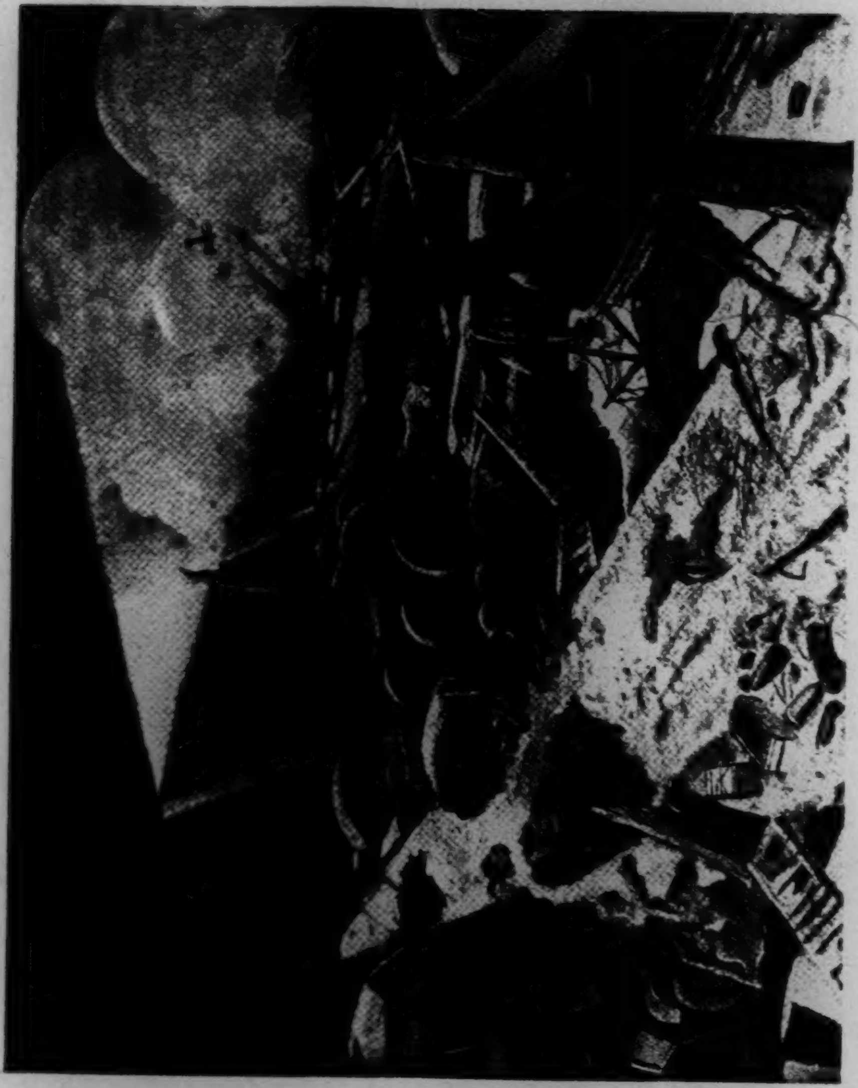


Figure 25. Paul Nash, *Void*, 1918.

Reprinted from Canadian War Records Office, *Art and War: Canadian War Memorials*, with an article by P.G. Konody (London: Colour Magazine Ltd., 1919), plate 25.

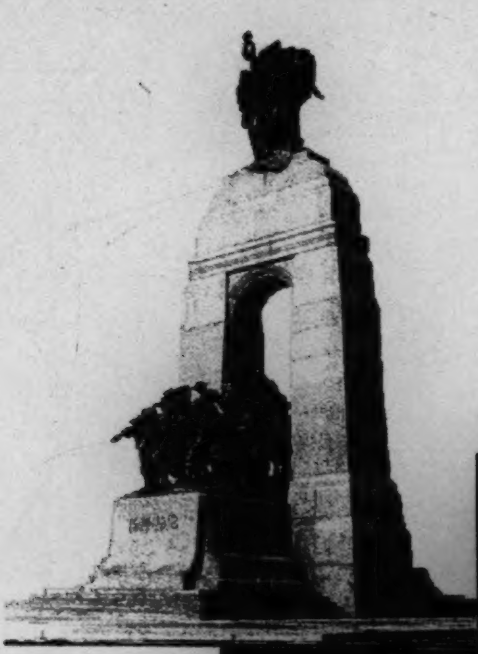
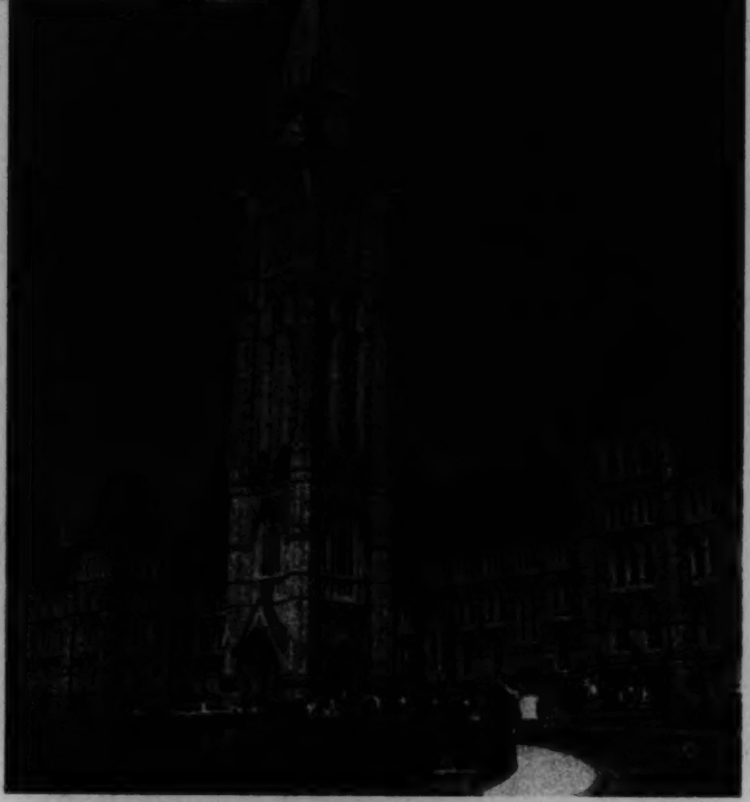


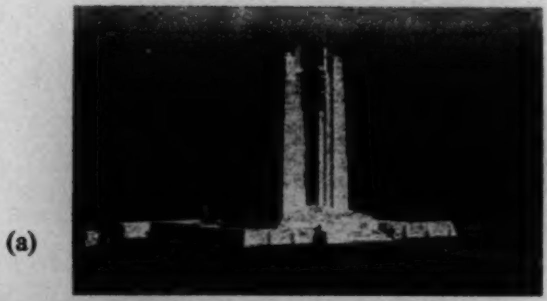
Figure 26. Vernon March, *The Great Response*, 1926-34.

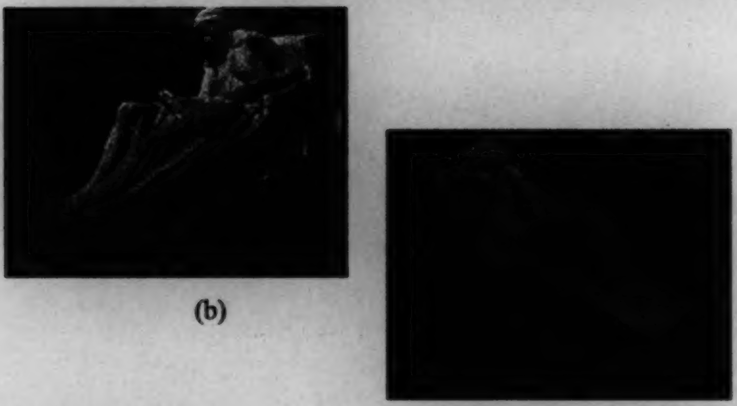
Reprinted from Veterans Affairs Canada website http://www.vac-acc.gc.ca.

Figure 27. John Pearson and Jean Omer Marchand, *Peace Tower*, 1922.

Reprinted from Veterans Affairs Canada website http://www.vac-acc.gc.ca.







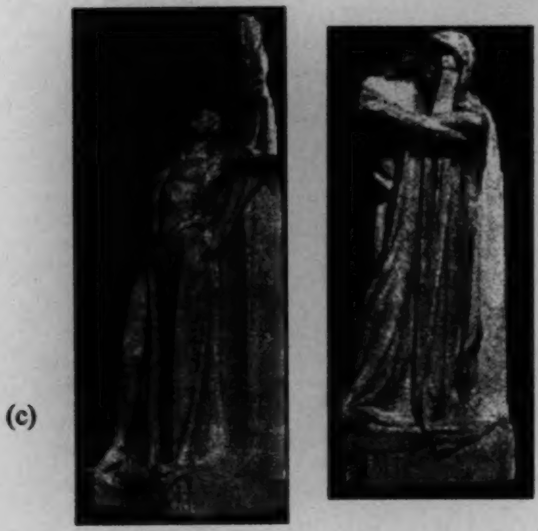


Figure 28. Walter Allward, front view of the *Vimy Memorial* (a), as well as details of several sculptural figures including Male and Female Mourners (b), and Statues of Justice and Peace (c), 1925-36.

Reprinted from Veterans Affairs Canada website http://www.vac-acc.gc.ca.

Figure 29. Coeur de Lion MacCarthy, *Canadian Pacific Railway Monument*, Vancouver, 1922. Identical monuments were also built by the CPR in Winnipeg and Montréal.

Reprinted from Art of the First World War website http://www.art-ww1.com/gb/index2.html.